An Exploration into the use of Monitoring & Evaluation by Third Sector Sports Themed Employability Charities to Evidence a Social Impact

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Wolverhampton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

January 2020

This work or any part thereof has not previously been presented in any form to the University or to any other body whether for the purposes of assessment, publication or for any other purpose (unless otherwise indicated). Save for any express acknowledgments, references and/or bibliographies cited in the work,

I confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and of no other person.

Signature……*C. Corrigan*……..

Date……December 30th 2019……..

Acknowledgements

I would like to start by expressing my deepest gratitude towards my supervisors Richard Medcalf, Kay Biscomb and Chris Sellars for their guidance, support, constructive criticism and expertise. My PhD journey has been neither easy nor linear, and you have all kept on mentoring me, displaying professional standards that I hope to one day achieve.

I would never have been accepted to study for a PhD without the initial dedication and mentoring from Jim Morris, and secondly Martin Dixon. You both believed in me and pushed me to achieve more, so I am forever grateful.

Dr. David Scott and Alex Blower, your friendship and advice throughout my time in Wolverhampton has been wonderful. You have been there whenever I needed to pick your brains, or to simply unwind and relax on our daily walks. Thank you both very much.

Lastly, to my loving and supportive family. Everything that I try to achieve is with the intention of bettering our lives. My wife Katie, you have been the rock that I need, and I could never have even considered doing this without you.

Thanks to you all for making this a possibility.

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Abstract

The third sector is under increasing demand to evidence the social impact that it achieves, especially as the government imposes greater financial restrictions (Harlock, 2013). Sport has been used by the third sector as a vehicle to attempt to achieve numerous objectives (Coalter, 2011). These objectives have included, amongst many more, combating crime, stopping racism and integrating immigrants (Coalter, 2011). This research focuses on third sector organisations that use sport to improve employability skills for young people (Roberts, 2016). The mystical power of sport to aid employability skills has been scrutinised for numerous years, without comprehensive results (Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2013).

Utilising a qualitative approach, this thesis aims to explore how through the use of Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E), sports themed employability charities can greater evidence their social impact (Arvidson, 2009). The qualitative research initiates with nationwide semi-structured interviews that offer in an in-depth exploration into the demand and realities faced within the third sector (McNiff, 2007). An Action Research period totalling twelve months explores further the realities of working within the third sector and investigates the findings revealed within the nationwide interviews. The Action Research period, completed at a Midlands based sports for good charity, produces immersive data acquired through interviews, observations and fieldwork (Anderson & Herr, 2005).

The results identify that the third sector is under serious pressure to evidence impact, and is adjusting to a payments by results culture (Hyndman, 2017). The power struggles between funders, management teams and delivery teams to collate and

showcase data for impact are identified (Foucault, 1982). The results expose that M & E can be extremely difficult, especially when attempting to collect data in challenging environments. The expectancy of M & E data collection differs greatly from the reality (Morgan & Costas Battle, 2016). The Action Research element of the thesis offers improvements, both short and long-term, to the host charity, through a collaborative method (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). The thesis concludes by reviewing the impact of the Action Research at the host charity.

Keywords

Monitoring and Evaluation
Third Sector
Social Impact
Sports Themed Employability
Charity
Evidence for Funders
Action Research

Explanation of Abbreviations

AR= Action Research

CCI= Corporate Community Initiative

CGT= Constructivist Grounded Theory

CSR= Corporate Social Responsibility

EETs= Education, Employment or Training

GF4E= Get Fit For Employment

GT= Grounded Theory

LTIT= Long Term Impact Tracking

M & E= Monitoring and Evaluation

NEETs= Not in Education Employment or Training

OS= Outcome Star

PBR= Payment by Results

S4L = Sport 4 Life

SBI's= Sports Based Interventions

SMT= Senior Management Team

SROI= Social Return on Investment

TEEN's= Teenagers

TSO's= Third Sector Organisations

TSRC= Third Sector Research Centre

YP=Young Person

10YP= Ten Year Plan

Conference Presentations

Work from within this thesis has been presented at the following academic conferences:

UK Sport Development Network Conference

Hartpury University

February 2018

“The Use of M & E in Third Sector Sport Themed Employability Charities”

Leisure Studies Evaluation Seminar

Bournemouth University

May 2018

“M & E and Evidencing a Social Impact for the Third Sector”

Making an Impact - Valuing the Social and Economic worth of the Voluntary and Community Sector Conference

Liverpool Hope University

June 2018

“The complexities of Monitoring & Evaluation in the Third Sector; an Action Research study”

List of Tables and Figures

Chapter 1 Introduction

1. 0 Introduction to the Study

This chapter will form the introduction to the study, detailing the background to the study and identifying why there is a research justification. The chapter will offer a concise viewpoint on sports role within interventions, and identify the need to greater evidence the impact of sport. The aims of the research and the research questions are presented. The chapter concludes with a synopsis of each chapter throughout the thesis.

1. 1 Background to the Study

The “mystical power” of sport has been identified by multiple sources to be able to “fix” many of society’s problems (Mellor, 2015). Sport has been used to attempt to reduce racism, knife crime, gang wars and unemployment (Nichols & Crow, 2004; Coalter, 2011). The assumed appeal of sport and in particular its ability to reach disadvantaged young people, has meant that sport can be seen as the “quick fix” to eradicate issues (Coakley, 2010). The thesis is grounded in the realities and lived experiences of employability themed charities that use sport as the vehicle to recruit and then upskill disadvantaged young people (16-29) who are currently not in education or employment (NEET). The use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) techniques to evidence the social impact of sport are investigated and discussed within the thesis.

The use of sport to combat socially deprived young people is not a new idea, with Thatcher’s Conservative Government of the 1980’s utilising sports based interventions

(Jefferys, 2017). Sport is still being used as a vehicle for change, with the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, releasing over one million pounds of funding in 2019 to sports groups supporting young Londoners at risk of exclusion or getting involved in violence and criminal activity (London.Gov.Uk, 2019). However, academic researchers, such as Sandford, Armour and Warrington (2006) have long been questioning the actual evidence base attached to the power of sport. Sandford *et al*. (2006, p.33) argue that the unprecedented levels of public and private funding available for sport related programmes in the UK, and the high expectations placed upon them to deliver specific measurable outcomes, mean that the need for credible monitoring and evaluation is pressing. Sports contribution to society, in particular the emphasis on sport and youth unemployment, and the call for a greater use of monitoring and evaluation are the key areas for exploration within the thesis (Coalter, 2011). Daniels, Bell & Horrocks (2018, p.779) insist that:

> *There is growing pressure for those who work in community sport to design and deliver sports programmes with evaluation in mind. Beyond reporting on how interventions have been implemented, those managing interventions need to be able to fully explain not just what works but why it works.*

The thesis will investigate the use of sports based interventions, primarily the use of sport to improve employability. The research will be conducted through nationwide interviews (study one) and action research at a sports themed employability charity (study two). For this research, and in particular the Action Research stage, the charities involved use sport as a vehicle to improve people's employability and life skills.

The use of sport to aid employability skills is still a relatively new area (see section 2.9 for a full review), and the evidence that sport can achieve on positive life skills and 'boost' employability is far from conclusive (Holt *et al*, 2017). The rhetoric, and the confirmation that sport can achieve, is, according to Coalter (2011) attributed to sports *evangelists*. There has been a prevalent academic demand for the power of sport to be demystified and a greater understanding of what works for whom, where and how (Coalter, 2015). It was in response to this academic demand for evidence, and a partnership with a charity that wanted to improve that resulted in the creation of this PhD. I applied as an external candidate, an ambitious sport development practitioner with a knowledge set on both academia and M & E (please see Positionality section for a greater description).

1. 2 Monitoring and Evaluation in the Third Sector

The use of sport to enhance employability skills within young people (16-29) has become prevalent since the early noughties (Roberts, 2016). Sport is seen to be an attractive option for disadvantaged youths (Collins & Haudenhuyse, 2015). However, the demand for a greater and more detailed use of M & E, to capture what works for whom, where and how, has increased (Harris, 2018). Funders, which can be a mixture of government backed schemes or private investors utilising their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds want to see a return for their investment. This evidence can be through a combination of outcomes (a progression from NEET to EET) or outputs (number of young people who have completed a qualification) (Newcomer, 2015). It is vital that any third sector organisation can produce rich and accurate data that evidences outcomes and outputs (Harlock, 2014).

The difficulties in this capturing of data are linked with sport traditionally relying on “evangelists”, or old-fashioned practitioners who simply “knew” that sport would make young people more confident, employable and hard-working (Harris & Adams, 2016). It can also be extremely difficult to ascertain sports role when assessing outcomes; a young person who was NEET may have support from several very different services in their search for work (Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2013). Charities face complex issues when assigning and attaching a social impact to their programmes. Another issue faced within the M & E of sport is that the service users can be averse to completing M & E, and may be wary of returning to a session if they feel that they will be “bombarded” with paperwork (Morgan & Costas Battle, 2016).

1. 3 Thesis Structure and Authorial Voice

This thesis is structured in a way that is appropriate for the field of study. It begins with a literature review and methodology sections. The data are then presented chronologically in two separate sections aligned to the two-part structure of the study. Namely, section one presents and analyses the interview data obtained from Study One (Chapter four). Section two investigates the themes further within the second study, which is an action research study with a Midlands based sports themed employability charity, titled Sport 4 Life (Chapters five to seven). The latter part of the thesis (Chapters eight to ten) combines both studies to enable holistic interpretation of findings.

Although presented chronologically and therefore separately, it is important to mention from the outset that this thesis represents a combined piece of work with themes and outcomes that transcend both elements of the research. Study One, and the industry

knowledge that this revealed was conducted to shape and formulate the action research for Study Two. Study One offers an “industry voice” into some of the issues faced collecting M & E data, allowing the researcher the opportunity to investigate further these issues during an action research period (Armour & McDonald, 2012).

Throughout the thesis, it has been appropriate to change the authorial voice between first and third person narrative dependent upon the nature of the data being presented. This change aligns to the particular phase of the study being discussed at the time. Where this occurs, it is noted as a deliberate change in voice.

1. 4 Host Charity for Study Two

The second part of the research (study two) involves a twelve-month Action Research period at a Midlands based sports themed employability charity- Sport 4 Life (S4L). S4L Life exists to create a level playing field for young people (ages 11-29) from disadvantaged backgrounds and further details can be found in Section 2.8 (Introduction to Sport 4 Life). The work of S4L, and the use of sport to boost employability, is a summarised in The Study on the Contribution of Sport to the Employability of Young People in the Context of Europe Strategy (2017) as follows:

> *Sport 4 Life is a Sport Plus 2 programme which specifically targets NEETs and emphasises the centrality of employability, which is reinforced in all components of the programme. Although sport is used to attract participants, the Sport Plus programme is systematically focussed on employability. Sport is used to support and reinforce the employability content of workshops via an experiential learning approach which emphasises the soft skills of team*

working, time management, conflict management, communication skills, problem solving and leadership.

S4L have given the researcher full permission to use their name throughout the study and to discuss and analyse real events that they experience in the third sector. All staff names are anonymised throughout the thesis and S4L were included in the fact-checking process.

1. 5 Researcher's Background

It is important that the researcher's background and any possible links to the research area are discussed (Krefting, 1991). Any pre-conceived biases will naturally have an impact on what a researcher sees, acts and observes in the field, as discussed by Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p.123):

> *The qualitative researcher's perspective is perhaps a paradoxical one: it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others—to indwell—and at the same time to be aware of how one's own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.*

I will now inform the reader on my background, and how this has influenced my approach to the research (Berger, 2015). I will begin by presenting my childhood upbringing and contextualising my journey towards working in academia, highlighting the areas that will have impacted my positionality and beliefs as a researcher (Chavez, 2008). This section will be presented as a narrative.

Childhood for me was a happy time, surrounded by loving family and friends, on a busy and socially deprived council estate. My home town of Rugeley, Staffordshire had suffered financially since the closure of the local coalmine (a profession that

brought my grandfather to England from Scotland in the late sixties). Money was sparse, and whilst I am not attempting to paint a Dickensian picture, times were hard. My father, a hard working ex-miner who worked as an asbestos removal operative, was often working away from home, leaving my housewife mother to tend for four children. I have fond memories of playing outside with my brother and older cousins, especially football.

I certainly was not born with a silver spoon placed in my mouth. Sport played a huge role in my childhood. Whilst I was never the most naturally gifted footballer, I was made team captain of every team I played for. This was through my organisational skills and my commitment. I worked exceptionally hard on a football field and prided myself on how professionally I approached football. Playing sport, especially football, throughout my adolescence, I felt, improved my confidence, self-esteem and ability to work well in a team; Coalter (2007, p.45) may even call me a "sport evangelist".

At school, whilst I always felt like I was competent, I struggled to concentrate and spent the majority of my teenage years daydreaming over football and the opposite sex. I was only truly diligent in Physical Education lessons, and I certainly felt it was not "cool" to try hard at school. I scraped just enough GCSE's to enrol in a local sixth form college, but instead of attending on my induction day, I was already working as a labourer with my father's asbestos firm. Instantly I now felt education was for "kids" and decided I was now a fully-fledged working person, who enjoyed earning a wage and starting to socialise at weekends in the numerous pubs and nightclubs that the Midlands had to offer.

After a year working hard as a labourer, I was made redundant after the job had been completed. My parents were determined that I did not follow my father's path into the

asbestos industry, so I began to explore possible career routes in the construction industry. I distinctively remember my late father's advice, "Get a trade son, and you will have a job for life". It was at this point, that for six months, I became what Furlong (2006) would identify as a Hidden NEET. I was not working, or signing on, but simply without work and I was very quickly wasting away my small amount of savings. It was an important time of my life that I reflected on heavily when I began to work with NEETS at S4L (Berger, 2015). I got into bad habits, staying up late, lying in bed all morning and drinking too much alcohol, all factors identified with NEETS by Sissons and Jones (2012). I had stopped playing sport as I completely tore my anterior cruciate ligament playing football aged sixteen.

I was then successful when applying for an apprenticeship as an Electrician at a local firm. I worked, for the majority of it unhappily, as an Electrician for ten years. All of the way through my career as an Electrician, I yearned to be working in a sport or educational setting. Due to my previous ACL injury limiting my playing opportunities, I began to volunteer as a football coach, and I really enjoyed leading groups and presenting my tactics and training plans. I relished public speaking and applying some theory to my practical delivery. At the age of twenty-seven, I reached a pivotal moment of my life. I was made redundant, due to the electrical firm collapsing due to the credit crunch, and I was now a recently married, unemployed father of three, suffering the strain and hardship that unemployment can present (Krueger & Mueller, 2008).

I had responsibilities and bills to pay but I knew I wanted to enter the career I had dreamed of, a career in sport and education. It was at this point, for the first time in my life, that I had to sign on as unemployed and receive benefits. I was, as Nixon's (2006) study identified a low-skilled, poorly educated unemployed male manual worker. It was a very depressing experience, and I found the jobcentre staff very unhelpful and not

very understanding of my predicament. After nine months of being unemployed I applied for and was successful on gaining a place at Staffordshire University studying a Sports Coaching and Development Foundation Degree. I distinctively remember the Job Centre clerk telling me I was making a mistake going to University at my age and that I should concentrate on taking one of the factory jobs that I was offered. I did not realise at the time, but my large period being unemployed and signing on, has resulted in me emphasising and understanding the NEETS that were present on the S4L courses I was researching. I have “walked in their shoes” and been that young person who was not sure on the best career path for them (Sweenie, 2009).

I thoroughly enjoyed my time spent in education, so much so that I applied to do the third year and complete a full degree. I was still volunteering as a sports coach, and I worked very hard to gain a BA Honours Degree (first class). This allowed me the opportunity to apply for full time work in sport and education. I was appointed at Stafford College in 2013, as a Sports Development Officer (SDO), who had lecturing responsibilities. This role, allowed me the opportunity to gain first hand practical experience in two areas that were to become very important for my PhD research. My SDO role brought me into contact with M & E reports, in particular applying for funding and working with funders to satisfy their external reports (Hylton, 2013). I led on various projects that aimed to increase student’s physical activity across the College, and my role was to then fill in the M & E forms and report to my supervisors and funders.

My lecturing role, which involved lots of flexible cover for staff members who were absent, was primarily with BTEC Level One Learners. These learners, typically, were

students who may have been expelled or under-achieved at school, this was their "second chance" (Te Riele, 2000). Their concentration spans were very limited, and my teaching methods had to be innovative, relaxed and non-traditional (Mitsoni, 2006). The groups I worked with were very similar to the groups I observed on S4L courses. Traditional educational routes were not for them, they had all struggled in mainstream education (Brown, 2007). Again, the experiences I picked up lecturing these groups were invaluable when I started my PhD research. I had amassed experience working with learners, who typically, did not really want to be there. They were not "perfect" learners and my teaching style and mannerisms had to reflect that.

After two happy years working at Stafford College I applied, optimistically, to the PhD studentship that had been advertised. The research specification was all in place, and whilst I felt confidently, I met all of the selection criteria, I did not hold out much hope due to my non-traditional academic background and lack of Master's Degree (Booth & Satchell, 1995). I was pleasantly surprised and very excited when offered the opportunity to begin the PhD.

I now must reflect on my previous experiences and consider what biases I bring to the study (Chenail, 2011; Cresswell & Miller, 2000). I have no previous experience working in the charity sector, so for this I am what Dwyer and Buckle (2009) define as an Outsider. Like many of the UK population (Lindstrom and Henson, 2011) my only previous charity knowledge had been watching events like Comic Relief and Sport Relief on the TV. If anything my attitude toward charity workers may have been slightly negative, due to the many "Chuggers" (Quigley, 2010) who would often, and in all honesty frustratingly so, approach me on numerous occasions when I would be walking up Stafford high street on my lunch breaks.

My experiences lecturing to, at times, rowdy and hard to control groups, meant that I do admittedly share an empathy with the S4L delivery staff. When I am present in the research setting, I do quite easily see myself “as a deliverer”, in that I feel comfortable standing in front of a whiteboard and getting my points across (Greene, 2014). Many of the S4L staff have had a similar career route as myself (minus the early construction route). They are graduates from sport related degrees who have an interest in sports coaching and are confident public speakers (Minten and Forsyth, 2014). I have admitted to having previous M & E experience and I must acknowledge the biases this may have on this research. The M & E forms I was completing were quite basic, and not to the level of detail that S4L have to fill in. In addition, the M & E forms I was completing had very little external influence on my role. By that I mean my role as an SDO was internally funded by the College so I had no external pressures to ensure that my M & E completion was financially prudent, as is definitely the case at S4L (Ellis & Gregory, 2008). Therefore, whilst confessing to having some knowledge of M & E prior to starting my PhD, I do not think it has really had any impact on how I view M & E data collection and I do not feel it has influenced my observations.

I have been very honest in admitting that my upbringing, from a low socio-economical background (Croizet & Claire, 1998, p.590) has meant that I empathise with the majority of S4L NEET course attendee’s. I know what it is like to watch every penny and not have a privileged background, or a ready-made career to step into. However, again, I do not particularly feel that this has had a major impact on my role as a researcher. As is explained in much more detail later in the thesis, the NEETS who attended S4L courses were not part of my observations. I was observing the M & E process and attempting to understand how through M & E, S4L could better evidence their Social Impact (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). Therefore, whilst I may share a similar

background, and have experienced parts of my own life being NEET, I do not feel this has heavily influenced my approach to this research.

Lastly, but importantly so, I feel that my upbringing, and my careers in construction and now academia, have entailed me with a particular skillset for conversing with anyone and everyone. My role as a researcher has meant at times I may be researching or working alongside multiple people within one day (Cresswell, 2015). Reflecting upon my researcher's background has been a vital part of the qualitative researcher process. It has allowed the reader an opportunity to greater understand how I may have made sense of certain research settings, and how I may (or may not) have viewed data or areas of research interest to others.

1. 6 The Aims and Originality of the Thesis

This study aims to explore the difficulties of M & E collection within the third sector, focusing on sports themed employability charities. The thesis will begin by interviewing industry experts and discussing emerging themes from the sector, offering a practitioner's perspective on M & E. The reality of evidencing the social impact of sport to aid employability is investigated during an Action Research period. Using a collaborative action research approach the researcher intends to not only report on M & E within the third sector, but ensure the host charity can greater evidence their social impact upon completion. Anderson and Herr's (2005) goals of action research and validity criteria are used as a guide for completing the action research successfully.

This thesis will aim to explore and update on some of the concerns that Harlock (2013), Gibbon & Dey (2011) and Arvidson (2009) discuss around evidencing a social impact within the third sector. The thesis will explore and add depth to similar issues identified

by Morgan & Costas Battle (2019), who highlighted the difficulties the sport for good sector faces achieving numerical targets. The thesis will present in-depth and unique analysis on the sector demands and realities, combining the interview findings with a twelve-month action research period. Issues such as funders' demands, internal struggles of deliverers and non-deliverers and the realities of live M & E collection are investigated.

1. 7 Research Questions

The thesis will answer the following research questions:

1. What perspectives are prevalent across third sector sports organisations with regards to their use and application of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques?
2. How can sport for good charities greater evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation?
3. What are the challenges and opportunities of Monitoring and Evaluation for a medium sized sport for development charity in the third sector?

In an attempt to answer these questions and to expand the knowledge base within this field, data were collected from the following sources;

- Nationwide interviews with senior industry staff who had extensive experience collating M & E data and evidencing a social impact (described hereafter as Study One).

- A twelve-month period of action research at a midlands based sports themed employability charity (described hereafter as Study Two). Using a collaborative action research approach the researcher intends to not only explore and report on the

realities of M & E within the third sector, but ensure the host charity can greater evidence their social impact upon completion.

1. 8 Synopsis of Chapters

1.8.1 Chapter One - Introduction

This chapter introduces the aims of the research and identifies the research questions. The originality and the need for the research are presented. The concept of sports based interventions, and the difficulty evidencing the impact that they can achieve is introduced. The host charity for study two are presented. The chapter concludes by offering the reader an insight into the researcher's background. The structure and layout of the thesis is detailed.

1.8.2 Chapter Two – Literature Review

This chapter presents the research that has helped to both shape and inform the research and is prevalent across the study. Previous research into the field of M & E, and in particular sport and the third sector, is analysed and reviewed. The work of Coalter, Kay and Arvidson feature prominently throughout this chapter. The review chapter aims to present the reader with an overview of the existing literature and to identify any gaps in the research. A detailed introduction to S4L (the host charity) is presented. The chapter is divided into research themes, with the concluding section analysing the Foucauldian power discourse.

1.8.3 Chapter Three – Methodology

The methodology chapter introduces to the reader the key methodological approaches and concepts that have been conducted in order to complete the research process. The chapter begins by discussing qualitative research, the perceived strengths and weakness associated with this research method, and the reasoning behind its selection for the study. The epistemological and ontological viewpoints are then analysed. The grounded theory approach for data analysis is then reviewed. The chapter concludes by focusing on the use of semi-structured interviews and the justification for an Action Research approach for study two.

1.8.4 Chapter Four – Study One

Chapter four presents the research conducted across study one, which involved a nationwide set of semi-structured interviews with industry experts. The method selected and the interview process is detailed, as well as the ethical considerations. The chapter concludes by discussing the emergent themes from the data analysis. These themes are then used to inform and guide the action research process for study two.

1.8.5 Chapter Five – Study Two

Chapter five focuses on study two, which is a twelve-month action research study of an employability focused sports themed charity based in the Midlands. This chapter details the host charity and their staff. The suitability and theoretical concepts behind the action research process are discussed in detail. The chapter covers the first cycle of action research at S4L.

1.8.6 Chapter Six – Action Research Cycle Two

Chapter six focuses on the cyclical nature of the action research conducted. The emergent themes and data are analysed, and the chapter attempts to evidence the immersion into the research setting. The chapter discusses both the research plans and the realities of conducting M & E within the charity sector, especially with disadvantaged communities. A particular focus is placed on the power struggles within the charity sector, with funders demands often impacting onto the way M & E is conducted and managed within the organisation.

1.8.7 Chapter Seven- Action Research Cycle Three

Chapter seven focuses on the third and final cycle of action research that is conducted at S4L. The chapter discusses the final interviews and discussions at S4L. The emergent themes and key concepts from the interviews and researcher observations are analysed.

1.8.8 Chapter Eight – Collective Results

Chapter eight presents and analyses the collective results from across study one and study two. The original aims of the research are used as a reference point. An evaluation of the research findings is conducted and discussed. The original contribution to knowledge is examined and the limitations of the study are presented. The chapter concludes with a summary of the collective results.

1.8.9 Chapter Nine - Reflections

Chapter nine reflects on the research process, firstly reflecting on the impact that the researcher's background had on the study, and then the future ambitions for the research. The difficulties of achieving balance as a researcher, and the need for action research to be fully co-operative are detailed. A personal reflection on the action process is offered, with the aim to be informative to any novice action researchers.

1.8.10 Chapter Ten – Summary & Conclusions

Lastly, Chapter ten is a summary of the research conducted, focusing on areas of further research. Conclusions from the research are presented, utilising the work of Molineux (2018) to examine the impact of the action research conducted. The chapter explores the impact, both short and long term, of the research. The chapter concludes by discussing further research proposals that could emerge from the thesis.

1.9 Introduction Summary

This introduction chapter has presented to the reader the overview of the study and the aims of the research. The research questions have been detailed and discussed. The need for sport, and in particular sport within the third sector, to greater evidence the impact it achieves is introduced. The chapter has attempted to inform the reader of the structure ahead and the focus of the thesis in a concise format. The chapter has concluded with a synopsis of the chapters within the theses. The next chapter of the thesis is a literature review.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review

This review of literature will provide the reader with an overview of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) in the Third Sector, detailing how charities are identifying and displaying the social impact, they claim to achieve (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). The literature review will cover key areas such as evidencing impact, collecting M & E, data analysis of M & E and the rise of financial impact data. The review will initially look at the third sector's approach to M & E, before focusing on the 'Sport for Good' sector and sports based interventions, with an emphasis on sports 'ability' to improve employability skills (Spaaij *et al*,.2013). The literature under review originates from academic sources, government reports and charity impact reports. The review is a narrative assessment of the current state of knowledge, highlighting where there seems insufficient literature and suggestions for future research (Gibbs *et al*, 2017). The review will offer an overview of research conducted and highlight gaps in the knowledge and conclude by focusing on the power discourse work of Foucault (1982) and the implications for the research.

2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation in the Third Sector

The 'Third Sector', is defined as organisations that are non-governmental, value driven (motivated to further social, environment or cultural purposes and not primarily driven to make a profit) and reinvest any surpluses to further their objectives (Kelly, 2007).

The third sector comprises a myriad of organisations. While each and every organisation plays its own role, the sector as a whole aims to be a prime mover in activating and informing citizens, and in advocating issues of public interest and concern in order to influence government policies (Arvidson, 2009). Arvidson (2009) identifies the aims of the third sector to be campaigning for change; to deliver public services; to promote social enterprises; and to strengthen communities. Arvidson (2009) stresses that the third sector can no longer rely on anecdotal evidence to prove its impact. A new strand of modernisation has focused primarily upon performance, delivery, regulation and accountability in order to reform the centralised, ineffective and bureaucratic nature of the third sector (Glendinning, Powell & Rummery, 2002). It is this sector shift towards an evidence based approach, and the need to 'prove' what works where and for whom that the research will explore. In particular, the focus on how sport can capture and evidence social impact, and the realities of this capturing process (Spaaij, 2009).

Carmel and Harlock (2008) argue that politicians create the third sector and policy makers who wish to govern it. Alcock's (2010) research, discusses a political battlefield, with the third sector described as resilient, innovative and creative in its approach. The third sector policy environment has developed rapidly in the UK from high levels of horizontal support under the previous Labour government to the Coalition's commitment to the promotion of a 'Big Society' and reductions in public support for the sector (Macmillan, 2013).

A report by the Third Sector Research Centre (Harlock, 2013) provided a summary of the core research undertaken by the TSRC over the five years from 2008 to 2013. The

report detailed that the drive towards impact assessment and performance management has led to the growth of a plethora of tools to support this, and guidance is needed for third sector organisations wishing to utilise these. Secondly that decisions on whether and how to measure impact are often driven by external forces and concerns over funding (Arvidson, 2009). And lastly an analysis of major tools for measurement of performance, including in particular the Social Return on Investment (SROI) model, revealed that these often require significant organisational commitment to implement (Harlock, 2013).

Charities are under increasing pressure to report their achievements systematically to external stakeholders. This is the result of a number of drivers including a growing role for voluntary organisations in the delivery of public services, more demanding funders and donors, the modernisation and professionalisation of the sector and changes to regulation (Breckell, Harrison & Robert, 2010). Because of these increasing pressures, and in light of the need for evidenced clear outcomes as a product of funding, third sector organisations have begun to consider the need for enhanced processes of monitoring and evaluation. This research, and in particular the literature review, identifies that how to conduct M & E, and especially the realities of M & E within the sport for good sector, are vastly under researched areas (Carmel & Harlock, 2008).

The third sector is described as diverse which means that *'there can be no "one size fits all" approach for measuring impact'* (Wainright, 2002, p.9). When making claims about outcomes and benefit, claims regarding organisational characteristics or sector distinctiveness, are often hard to validate. Wainwright's (2002) work, summarised below, explains the key terminology used by the third sector when conducting an

evaluation. The terminology below are key conceptual terms and definitions that will arise throughout the thesis.

Evaluation can take place by assessing any of the following**: Inputs**: the resources that contribute to a programme or activity, including income, staff, volunteers and equipment. **Activities:** what an organisation does with its inputs in order to achieve its mission. They could be training, counselling advice, or material provision of some sort. **Outputs**: countable units that are the direct products of a programme or organisation's activities. They could be classes taught, training courses delivered or people attending workshops, qualifications awarded, jobs placed. In themselves, they are not the ultimate objectives of the organisation. **Outcomes:** are the benefits or changes for intended beneficiaries. They tend to be fewer tangible and therefore fewer countable than outputs. Outcomes are usually planned and are therefore set out in an organisation's objectives. Outcomes may be causally and linearly related; that is, one outcome leads to another, which leads to another and so on, forming a linear sequence of if – then relationships. **Impact:** Are all changes resulting from an activity, project or organisation. It includes intended as well as unintended effects, negative as well as positive, and long-term as well as short-term.
(Adopted from Wainwright, 2002)

Outputs, outcomes and impact all claim a role in contributing towards understanding what organisations do (as in how they spend their money, what activities they undertake) and what they achieve in terms of added value, for example towards strengthening civil society, policy impact, and sustainable life-changes for individuals (Wainwright, 2002). Nevertheless, the problem of moving from what an organisation

achieves in relation to its immediate constituency or clients and sponsors to the wider impact provides great challenges, as discussed in Reed *et al*. (2006). While programme outcome refers to e.g. how an individual has been able to benefit from project activities, impact assessment encompasses a wider area aiming to track changes in community conditions (Hendricks, Plantz & Pritchard, 2008).

Arvidson (2009) reviewed material related to evaluations and impact assessments of third sector activities in the UK. Arvidson (2009) aimed to answer the following question: how we should evaluate as well as appreciate the achievements of third sector organisations? Arvidson's (2009) review finds evidence that the third sector struggles with a mismatch of expectations, unreasonable demands, badly targeted monitoring, and evaluations introduced due to funder demands.

Whilst presenting problems faced in the third sector, Arvidson (2009) also identifies positive uses of M & E. Arvidson's (2009) research suggests that it forces organisations to clarify 'grand social missions' primarily used for attracting attention from various stakeholders (Beck, *et al* 2008). Interestingly the research points to the use of qualitative participant data, such as individual narratives of experiences as an appropriate tool for capturing evidence (Arvidson, 2009). One of the aims of this research is to look at the findings of Arvidson (2009) and to locate this work within the sport for good setting, and to add insight into the perceived weaknesses and positives of M & E in the third sector.

Third sector organisations themselves emphasise that requirements for evaluation by funders has become more demanding over the last five years (in this instance 2004-

2009), and that their work has also become more controlled by this (Ellis & Gregory, 2009). A report prepared for Charities Evaluation Services (CES), based on a comprehensive recent survey of UK third sector organisations, outlines requirements and practices of evaluation, the use of evaluation for organisational learning and as a basis for funding (Ellis & Gregory, 2009). The situation is described as one filled with frustration for donors and organisations alike. Organisations lack skills and capacity to conduct meaningful evaluations, and to transform information gained through evaluation processes into organisational learning. Funders pay little attention to organisational size and the scope and scale of work when demanding information on outcomes, impacts and efficiency (Ellis, 2008). Reporting is irrelevant and sometimes even counter-productive to organisational mission (Ellis, 2008). As this research from Ellis (2008) was over a decade ago, a focus will be on how relevant the findings are in the present day.

A report on impact (Metcalf, 2013) revealed that a vast array of impact measurement tools available to the third sector have emerged in recent years in third sector organisations (TSO's) amid a competitive funding environment. Whether motivated by such external factors or by internal drives to learn and improve services, TSO's are faced with a complex range of choices about how best to measure and demonstrate the wider social impact achieved by their organisational activities. The large number of impact measurement tools available – upwards of 130 based on Substance's assessment – is based on a variety of different techniques, require different levels of resources and expertise, and may be suitable for particular sub-sectors more than others (Metcalf, 2013).

The CES report also suggests that it is not even clear that evaluation reports are used by funders as a basis for decision-making (Ellis, 2008). The report also indicates significant positive changes that have occurred in terms of capacity to support and promote self-evaluation as part of the introduction of quality standards (Ellis, 2008). A key quote from the report that links to this study highlights that:

> *Evidence from both funders and support agencies is that, despite the increase in resources and training, there is still a huge constituency of organisations that are struggling with the basics of monitoring and evaluation, particularly with an outcomes approach. Implementing an effective monitoring and evaluation system takes time and support.* (CES, 2008)

Further research by Ellis and Gregory (2009) found that a greater emphasis on intelligent funding, the development of smarter M & E systems and the growth of a knowledge management and improvement culture may lead to more pro-active evaluation based learning in the third sector. An overriding aim of the research is to offer a more recent viewpoint on these findings. The work of Ellis and Gregory (2009) warrants a revisit in comparison to present third sector delivery.

To summarise, the third sector now places great importance on the use of M & E and a myriad of techniques have developed over the last twenty years to support data collection. The research will investigate how the third sector is coping with the demand for M & E and analyse any areas to develop or improvements. The research conducted by Arvidson (2009) and Ellis & Gregory (2009) is now nearly ten years old and will be

explored through a current lens. The literature review will now focus on the third sector evidencing impact.

2.3 Evidencing Impact in the Third Sector

A strenuous demand now placed on the third sector in the UK is to evidence impact (Ogain, Pritchard & Lumley, 2012). A 2013 study by the New Philanthropy Central (NPC) revealed that if charities improved the way they communicate impact and how donations are used, they could potentially attract around £665 million more in donations. The evidence in the report also suggests that £1.7 billion might move to better performing charities if donors could more easily find and understand information about their impact (NPC, 2013). Charities need to produce impact reports that show measurable data that communicates well the difference they have made (NPC, 2013).

The findings revealed that displaying long-term impact was the hardest task for charities, with 77% of respondents listing this as difficult to achieve (Cupitt & Ellis, 2007). Lack of time and resources was a common problem for survey respondents in demonstrating the difference they make. One respondent explained that:

> *"It's at the top of our agenda, but we're a small team, with not a lot of funding and we are also facing funding issues in March – all this means that at a time when proving our impact is critical we are finding we don't have the time, resources or know-how to do it"* (p.24,Cupitt & Ellis, 2007).

Survey respondents identified a range of things about their organisations or their

funding that would help them better demonstrate the difference they were making. Supporting previous research by Ellis (2008) and Heady and Keen (2008), the biggest issue was time (69%). One commented that '*we're so busy doing the work there's no time to evaluate it*!' (p.22, Ellis, 2009). Ellis (2008) found that only 17 per cent (30) of the infrastructure organisations in her survey had a specialist monitoring and evaluation post. A dedicated M & E worker was highlighted by the CES (2008) survey as being "essential". More funding for monitoring and evaluation was asked for in the study (Ellis, 2009). Ellis & Gregory (2008) also found that, of the 179 infrastructure organisations in her survey, 26 per cent (44) did not get any funding for monitoring and evaluation from their funders, and only 11 per cent (14) reported getting all the costs of their monitoring and evaluation covered by funders.

As Ellis & Gregory's work was completed in 2008, it is less clear whether the evolution of the third sector in the past decade has translated to different ways of conceptualising M&E policy and practice due to a more challenging funding landscape. Research by Belfiore (2002) revealed that it is not just the sport sector that struggles to prove its impact since moving towards outcomes focused approach. Art charities struggle to prove their long-term impact, and have insufficient M & E approaches (Belfiore, 2002). This area of concern around the time available (or lack of) will be a key focus for this study. The research will investigate how modern day charities, with all of the concerns highlighted above, can evidence their social impact. The need for dedicated M & E staff is questioned and a greater understanding on how charities evidence their impact will be sought.

2.4 Social Return on Investment (SROI)

In an environment that extols the virtue of evidence-based policy, and in which the Treasury looks to hold tight the purse strings of public expenditure, there is greater pressure on charitable projects to demonstrate the benefits accruing from their actions, and wherever possible in financial terms (Stern, 2013). Non-profit and social enterprise organisations operate in an era of heightened pressure to demonstrate performance and provide concrete measures of impact to their funders and other stakeholders (Carman 2010; Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011).

Attempts are also being made to define a framework that can be used across the sector: in 2008 The Office for the Third Sector launched a concept called 'Social Return for Investment' (SROI), an initiative aimed to improve impact assessment of the sector through the use of a standardised approach of SROI. SROI aims to create 'a consistent and clear approach to understanding and reporting on the changes caused by an organisation' which is thought to benefit third sector organisations by providing basis to improve strategies and to better understand and demonstrate change, as well as facilitating decisions made by funders through ascertaining more intelligent investment.

Some third sector organisations have resisted using a market-based approach and language since it 'reduces organisational performance to financial values' which risks neglecting the human element in third sector work (Richmond, Mook & Jack, 2003). Whitman (2008, p.417) argues that evaluations can be used to examine how an organisation 'creates and reflects on its own vision and how well it performs in conveying that vision'.

The heightened pressure for results has led to a refinement of research techniques that involve forms of cost–benefit analysis in order to recognise the social contribution of services not given a financial value (Orlitzky & Benjamin, 2011). These use various techniques to assign a value in pounds to some of the outcomes from sports initiatives, perhaps in terms of health, crime or congestion (King, 2014). Led by the Cabinet Office, government departments and a network of non-governmental organisations (including the New Economics Foundation, Charities Evaluation Services, the National Council for Voluntary Organisations and New Philanthropy Capital) have enthusiastically been exploring the use of social return on investment (SROI) (Nicholls *et al*, 2009). The political shift will allow third sector organisations to vindicate, in monetary terms, their use of governmental financial aid (King, 2014). For example, Nevill and van Poortvliet (2011) have estimated that for every £1 invested in one sport project *'£7 of value is created for the state and the local community'*, largely through reductions in crime (King, 2014). SROI is an approach towards identifying and appreciating value created (Arvidson *et al*, 2013). According to a 2014 study by Davies *et al*, the social value of sports participation in England was £44.8 billion and the total financial and non-financial inputs to sport were £23.5 billion, giving an SROI ratio of 1.91. This means that for every £1 invested in sport, £1.91 worth of social benefit is generated.

The use of SROI, whilst still a relatively new concept, has been reviewed and assessed by academics (Cooney & Lynch-Cerullo, 2011; Gibbon & Dey, 2011; Arvidson *et al*, 2013; Millar & Hall, 2013). Critics of the use of SROI point to methodological problems

as Cooney and Lynch- Cerullo highlight in their (2011, p.9) review of SROI use in non-for profit organisations in America:

> *"There is a methodological dilemma in constructing the SROI, and by far the most complicated and time-consuming, arises when developing the formula for monetising the benefits. This is a two part step that requires first, a decision on a set of definitive outcomes to value, and second, a procedure for deriving a monetary estimate of the value of that outcome".*

Critics also pinpoint that SROI calculations can in extreme circumstances be exaggerated, in order to look more impressive to key stakeholders and investors (Arvidson *et al*, 2013). Gibbon and Dey (2011) stress that the quality and availability of data, the underlying measurement issues, causality and correlation and the timeframe used are all factors that should lead to users of SROI being cautious when making comparisons between organisations. As the final ratio return, i.e. £10 return for every £1 spent on a project, is a succinct and powerful way of communicating value and achievements, it naturally tends to receive the greatest 'headline' coverage (Lyon and Arvidson, 2011).

The SROI Guide emphasises that the final ratio should not be seen as the only reason for undertaking an assessment (Nicholls, 2017). However, arriving at an SROI ratio remains the distinctive feature of the SROI approach, perhaps to the exclusion of other messages (Arvidson, 2013). Use of SROI by the Manchester Sport and Leisure Trust (2013) in their annual report emphasises the financial savings to the local council, almost using the figures as preliminary forecast to save the trust from future sport and leisure cuts. Another concern is that the UK Governments' enthusiastic support for

SROI, which assumes that all impacts can be financialised, will result in a controlling rather than supportive view of social economy organisations (Gibbon & Dey, 2011; Pearce, 2009).

The use of SROI for evidencing an impact will be investigated throughout the research. The positives and negatives reviewed in this section will be analysed. The research will attempt to offer a current viewpoint on how charities use SROI data.

2.5 Monitoring and Evaluation of Sport in the Third Sector

The demand for detailed monitoring, evaluation and outcome data in interventions with socially excluded young people reflects governmental concern that such intervention should be 'evidence-based' and represent 'best value' (Crimmens *et al*, 2004). Research by Crimmens *et al.* (2004), MacDonald and Shildrick (2007) and McClelland and Giles (2016) reveals that monitoring and evaluating street-based youth work can be extremely difficult .Crimmens *et al.* (2004) research revealed that local deliverers found keeping relevant statistics of contacts and activities reasonably straightforward but wrestle with qualitative aspects of evaluation. Crabbe (2006) suggests a number of reasons for why M & E has historically been ignored in sport. These include an inherent belief in the good of sport, a lack of concern to measure its impact and apparent difficulty measuring that impact (Crabbe, 2006).

Coalter (2007, p.8) summarises why the social impact of sport has rarely been measured in the UK in, a wider social role for sport: Who's keeping the score?

> *The absence of systematic evidence of the effectiveness of such programmes can be explained by a number of factors…There has been an absence of a culture of monitoring and evaluation, bolstered by a range of factors: a simple belief in the efficacy of such interventions: limited project funding is concentrated on provision rather than evaluation and a general lack of research expertise…Most fundamentally there has been a widespread lack of clarity about the outcomes and their measurement and substantial methodological difficulties in controlling for intervening variables and assessing cause and effect relationships* (Nichols & Crow, 2004; Coalter *et al*., 2000; Witt and Crompton, 1996).

Evaluations of both diversionary and rehabilitative approaches suggest that the salience of sport can be effective in attracting at-risk youth to programmes (Coalter, 2007). Coalter suggests a 'Sport Plus' approach as the best method and urges project deliverers and their many partners to "See beyond sport and physical activities, rather than viewing them as an end in themselves*"* (2007, p.130)". This Sport Plus approach will be revisited in study two.

Coalter (2007) points to the *midnight basketball* projects in America, that have been successful in reducing crime rates (Wilkins, 1997; Hartmann & Depro, 2006), for a positive approach to a 'Sport Plus' project. The structured programme includes non-traditional education components which seek to develop employability skills, self-esteem, confidence, health awareness and substance abuse prevention (Farrell *et al*, 1995). Coalter (2007) stresses that a sport diversion must be complemented by development and that sport alone cannot achieve the desired outcomes. Coalter

(2007, p.132) summarises by urging “A need to understand the elements of process and different types of programmes required to maximize desired intermediate impacts for a range of groups”. Coalter has completed extensive work on M & E, especially questioning sport evangelists belief in the inherent ‘goodness’ of sport to achieve. A key area of Coalter’s work for this thesis is the demand for a greater explanation on what works for whom and where (Coalter, 2007).

Collins (2003), analysed the use of sport as a tool to reduce social exclusion. Using quantitative data (participation rates, leisure club memberships), Collins analysed a sport scheme for disadvantaged youths in the East Midlands. Collins (2003) identified that there was a “low take up of places on Champion Coaching by children from poorer areas”. Collins stresses, “There is hardly any serious research or evaluation of schemes that concern social inclusion and sport”. Some schemes claim to have positive short-term effects (DCMS, 1999; Coalter, 2001) but lack the longitudinal research needed to help overcome long-term barriers (Brodie & Roberts, 1992). Collins (2003, p.64) concludes his study by recommending that, “To release the potential of sport as a vehicle for achieving greater social inclusion, we need to know more than the relatively scattered and small scale existing research tells us”. This supports previous work by Coalter (2007) who demands that we (academics) finally start to question the “sport evangelists” and prove that sport can have a social impact.

Kay’s (2012) analysis of M & E for Sport in Development projects, whilst centred on M & E in international projects, reveals key findings for this study. The purpose of Kay’s (2012) paper was to direct attention to the issues surrounding the foremost

source of evidence - M & E systems designed and commissioned by external funders to assess their impact. Kay (2012) feels that M & E has been ignored by academics in the past as it is less intellectually exciting than researching the amorphous social change through sport. Kay (2012, p.891) highlights that:

> *"M & E systems inevitably serve multiple interests…in reality however, the need to demonstrate accountability by collecting data frequently takes precedence over concerns to disseminate it to provide programme with learning".*

Kay (2012) also questions how using a 'systematic' method to collect M & E impacts knowledge, by removing the opportunity for participants to offer feedback using dialogue that they are more familiar with (Win, 2004). Kay previously called for researchers to use qualitative data as a form of measuring social impact in her 2009 study on adolescent females who were participants in international sport for development projects. Kay (2009, p.88):

> *"The enthusiastic embracing of evidence-based policy has accentuated this: at an organizational level the requirement for accountability encourages an emphasis on methods that can help 'measure'. Alongside this, the use of qualitative approaches is limited by difficulties in resourcing more intensive forms of data collection at the level required to achieve credibility. This poses problems when the object of study is complex forms of human behaviour".*

Kay (2009) stresses that only through the use of well-structured qualitative data can researchers capture the complex and multi-faceted processes through which individuals experience beneficial social outcomes from sport. Quantitative work can

capture outcomes and monetary figures but not the “real” impact of a successful sport development project (Kay, 2009: Collins, 2003). Kay (2012,p.85), in a criticism seen often in the literature (Ellis, 2009: Alcock, 2010), also points out that, “Many M & E systems impose substantial workloads for little apparent return. Their day to day irrelevance comes to be viewed solely as mechanisms for accountability to funding agencies*”.* Kay (2012) concludes her quite damming report on M & E to advise on future improvements by shifting focus from capturing ‘definitive evidence’ to more alternative types of knowledge that may prove more “appropriate, valid and obtainable”.

Haudenhuyse *et al*. (2012, p.77) produced a study with the intent “to gain more insights into how sports are delivered for and experienced by youth who could be considered as socially vulnerable”. The study had limitations, with a very small sample size, however the qualitative methods produced rich empirical data relevant to this piece of work. The data was achieved via a mixture of site visits, interviews and questionnaires. Participants were targeted who had been identified by their coach as having “high social vulnerability” (Haudenhuyse *et al*, 2012). The study concludes by recommending that if we wish to better understand the potential of sports-based interventions for socially vulnerable youth, we need to focus our attention on experiences and not so much on outcomes (Haudenhuyse *et al*, 2012). This call for a greater understanding of “how” outcomes are achieved, as opposed to purely focusing on “how many” outcomes are achieved is stressed by Harris (2018).

Haudenhuyse, Theeboom and Skille (2014) continued their research in this specific field by attempting to understand how socially vulnerable youths become less

vulnerable by participating in sports. A systematic literature review presented the following key findings: Sport practitioners should have an extensive pre-existing knowledge of the challenges that vulnerable youth can face in order to identify strategies to help reverse this vulnerability through sport (Haudenhuyse *et al*, 2014). Haudenhuyse *et al* (2014) also stress the importance of incorporating opportunities in sports based practices for engaging in critical reflection on interpersonal processes to affect change. Haudenhuyse *et al* (2014) study concludes by advising further research analysing the role that the characteristics of the coach or youth worker, environment, specific sport activities and the interaction between leaders and participants has upon the positive impact of socially vulnerable youth partaking in a sport scheme. Research into all of these areas, and with a mixture of target groups, will help to eradicate the knowledge gap that exists when using sports based interventions to work with socially vulnerable youth (Haudenhuyse *et al*, 2014). The findings of Haudenhuyse et al (2014) demonstrate that further frontline (as opposed to conducting research through a systematic literature review) research is needed and this thesis will add greater depth to Haudenhuyse *et al's* (2014) findings.

Spaaij's (2009) research into the social impact of sport warns sport practitioners to avoid naive and unrealistic generalizations about the transformative capacity of sport. Spaaij (2009) demands further research into the processes and mechanisms that produce beneficial outcomes in particular social, cultural and political contexts across sport settings. Spaaij (2009) stresses that while sport participation is important as an end in itself (i.e., in terms of its intrinsic significance), one needs to 'add things to it' to enhance opportunities for sport to act as an agent of personal and social change. This finding verifies Crabbe *et al.* (2006) conclusion that 'it is the

adoption of a personal and social development model which is sacred to sport-based social inclusion programs rather than sport'. Spaaij's (2009) research also adds to a growing body of literature that stresses the essential role that experienced and welcoming peer leaders and mentors contribute to the social impact of sport (Giulianotti, 2011).

The work of Spaaij (2009) and Crabbe (2006) will help to shape the exploratory research, especially when discussing 'inherent beliefs about the power of sport'. As highlighted earlier, Crabbe *et al.* (2006) suggest a number of reasons why sport ignores the use of M & E. These include an inherent belief in the good of sport, a lack of concern to measure its impact and apparent difficulty measuring that impact. The research will reveal if this 'neglect of M & E' is still prevalent within the sport for good sector (Crabbe, 2006). The extensive work of Coalter (2007;2009), especially Coalter's request to identify what works for whom, how and where will be a key reference point for the thesis, especially when investigating how a social impact can be evidenced through the use of sport.

2.6 Sports Based Interventions

A sports based intervention, is the use of sport to help alleviate issues, both locally and nationally, such as violence, unemployment or social disharmony (Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2013). Chamberlain (2013) reviewed the use of Sports Based Interventions (SBI's) in the UK to help reduce crime and unemployment rates. Chamberlain (2013, p.8) identifies that "sport can be used as a hook" to connect young

people to skills training, employment and educational programmes. Chamberlain's study analysed if SBI's are as successful as claimed in helping reduce anti-social behaviour and increasing employability for adolescents from socio-economically deprived areas (Nicholls, 1997). Chamberlain (2013) struggled to find conclusive evidence that SBI's achieve their desired outcomes.

Coakley and Donnelly (2004) and Kelly (2011) note that the assumption that sporting activity can act as a useful tool for preventing crime as well as helping to rehabilitate youth offenders has not been rigorously tested. Chamberlain (2013) highlights that most of the data for the value of SBI's is anecdotal in nature, consisting of relatively small sample sizes, as well as often omitting to track research participants beyond a relatively short time period. The research conducted in study two will investigate and add further discussion to Chamberlain's (2013) results. The findings of Chamberlain (2013), in particular the focus on the use of SBI's for aiding employability will be discussed further in Chapter eight (Collective Results). Sports Based Interventions have proven to be a successful deterrent from a life of crime and delinquency according to in depth studies from MacDonald and Marsh (2001); MacDonald and Marsh (2002); MacDonald and Marsh (2005) and MacDonald *et al*. (2005). In addition, the work of Nicholls and Crow (2004), Nicholls (2004) and Nicholls (2010) offer comprehensive research on the use of sport for crime prevention and reduction. A comprehensive literature review from Taylor *et al* (2015) identified that sport can achieve the following social outcomes: health benefits, a reduction in crime, education benefits and social capital. Whilst the work of Taylor *et al* (2015) is exhaustive, there is little focus on how sport can be used to achieve (or improve a young person's opportunity) employability. Taylor has previously compiled research on the economic

impact of sport (Taylor & Gratton, 1985; 2000), highlighting the positive financial impact that sport can achieve.

The M & E used by most of the studies on SBI's are heavily reliant on qualitative research and/or questionnaire-based self-reports of behavioural change (Chamberlain, 2013). They are obtained typically directly from research participants themselves and, therefore, are open to the accusation of subjective bias (Skille, 2009). There is a lack of methodologically robust evidence to support the argument that participation in sporting activity can directly lead to a reduction in antisocial and offending behaviour (Chamberlain, 2013).

Research by Smith and Waddington (2004, p. 281) argued that support for sport-based social inclusion projects among policy makers and practitioners is 'based on an uncritical perception of sport as an unambiguously wholesome and healthy activity in both a physical and moral sense'. Walker, Heere and Kim (2013, p. 313) stress that some sports based interventions experience "evaluation-phobia", whereby project leaders fear the collection of hard evidence as it may in essence demonstrate programme ineffectiveness. Tacon & Oughton (2007) reveal that there is an urgent need to evaluate sport-based social inclusion projects so that their outcomes and effects can be measured and understood, and to improve future policies. This research by Tacon & Oughton (2007) is further justification for the research conducted within this thesis. There is a greater need to understand exactly what a sports based intervention can achieve.

Kelly's (2011) research on the use of SBI's to aid social inclusion in the UK presents key findings for this study. Using semi structured interviews with participants and staff on a Positive Futures scheme, a national sport and activity based social inclusion programme and analysing the M & E work of Substance (project evaluators) Kelly (2011) highlights that;

> *"only a minority of participants accessed education, training and employment opportunities as a result of participating in the project. High participant numbers (in total, the three main projects worked with over 5,000 participants between September 2005 and August 2006) do not necessarily indicate that projects are making a significant impact on local youth unemployment".*

Kelly's (2011) work does indicate that since a change in evaluation techniques used by Positive Futures in 2006, the use of SBI's to tackle youth unemployment was more successful. In 2008–9, for example, the evaluators report that 1,808 'Positive Futures' participants volunteered, 574 gained employment and 364 achieved an 'accredited outcome' (Crabbe, 2009). This positive increase in numbers could, be argued, solely down to a smarter use of M & E outcome reporting, or a greater realisation of the importance of collecting M & E to evidence outcomes.

Research into how sport in the third sector can be used to aid social inclusion by Skinner, Cowell and Zakus (2008) revealed that the delivery of programs in harder to reach communities appears to be more successful when a social development or youth work approach is taken that uses sport as the engagement tool. The research focuses on a UK charity, The Positive Futures through Sport Foundation, that uses a sports based social inclusion approach. The charity uses sport as a hook to engage

and encourage young people to look at the broader issues that affect them (Skinner *et al*, 2008). Their method helps build community participation and citizenship and is a pathway to education and employment opportunities, which in turn, increase the social capital stocks of the community (Crabbe, 2006). This method of using sport as the hook is of paramount interest for this thesis, especially during the Action Research stage. Again, it will be interesting to compare the findings from Skinner *et al,* (2008) with S4L, as the approach to recruit young people share similarities.

2.7 The Need for Evidence

The third sector has played an important role in helping the government's policy shift towards using sport for aiding social cohesion, improving health, combating social exclusion and helping economic, physical and social regeneration (Collins, 2010). In comparison to other socio-cultural practices, sports-based practices seem more capable in attracting young people independently of their socio-economic background (Feinstein *et al.,* 2006; Buelens *et al.,* 2015) and seem to provide rich contexts for reaching so called harder to reach youth (Crabbe, 2007; Feinstein et al., 2006; Spaaij, 2009).

There has been an increase in both academic and policy-related literature on the economic importance of sport (Davies, 2004; Gratton and Henry, 2001; Gratton et al., 2001; Davies, 2002a). This has largely stemmed from the need for a more systematic evaluation process to underpin strategies for sport and to enable more efficient decision making with regard to resource allocation (Lincoln and Stone, 1999). Charities (such as S4L) can no longer use sport as an 'easy fix' to help solve

their complex problems (Coakley, 2011). The third sector now must provide numerous stakeholders with evidence that sport can have a positive social impact (Arvidson, 2009). As Coakley (2011, p.7) states:

> *Sector leaders fund policies and programs based on assumed developmental benefits of sports, and they are joined by others who believe that sport participation and consumption will create healthy, productive people; decrease deviance and disruptive actions; and alleviate boredom and alienation. As these beliefs, testimonials, and endorsements are woven into dominant narratives, most people see little need for critical research and theory that could inform policy formulation, program design, and personal decisions about sports in everyday life.*

Historically sport has had very little reason to justify the impact it can have on young people (Coalter, 2007; Bloyce & Smith, 2009). Kay (2012) notes that the wider alignment of domestic sport policy with the evidence based approach of the New Labour governments of 1997-2010 resulted in an upsurge in M & E, particularly in youth sport. In the last decade, several research reviews commissioned by the government to examine the evidence for sports claimed positive benefits (Collins *et al*, 1999; Coalter, 2005). The general conclusion of these reviews is that there is a lack of robust research-based evidence on the outcomes of sports participation. As one review concludes:

> "*policymakers lack the evidence required to make informed policy decisions and to connect sport issues to other policy priorities"* (Newman *et al*, 2013, p.9).

In a 2010 report for Sport England, Coalter argues that existing research is characterised by methodological problems (such as a lack of control groups), a complex relationship between cause and effect, and a lack of longitudinal research. Part of the problem is that sports projects rarely monitor or evaluate their outcomes (Coalter, 2010). A review of eleven UK schemes that use sport to divert young people from criminal behaviour found that “information about outcomes was hard to come by”, whilst a review of one hundred and twenty programmes in the USA found that only 4% evaluated changes in young people’s behaviour before and after the programme (Witt & Crompton, 1996). Sports charity Laureus, a sports for good foundation, argues in their annual report that practitioners, funders and government need to do more to evaluate projects using sport to tackle issues such as unemployment and rising crime rates (Morgan, 2013).

Gathering such evidence is complicated by conceptual, theoretical and methodological weaknesses that underpin many of such practices (Coalter, 2007). Assumptions about how specific sports interventions will contribute in achieving certain well-defined outcomes, and the ways and the contexts in which these outcomes can be attained are seldom clearly formulated (Coalter, 2010). Hartmann and Kwauk (2011, p. 285-286) refer to “anecdotal evidence, beliefs about the impact of sport in sound bites of individual and community transformation, packaged and delivered more often than not by those running the programs”. Harris (2018) work calls for realist evaluation methods to be used by practitioners, to enable a greater understanding of why and how a programme works, as opposed to just reporting on numerical targets.

Coalter's (2015) research into M & E identifies that there are *still* methodological difficulties in defining and measuring the impacts and outcomes of many social interventions and attributing cause and effect in any simple and straightforward way. The evangelists (Coalter, 2015) often ignore basic issues of social science methods. In part, this is because some view research in terms of affirmation rather than understanding or critique (Coalter, 2015). Coalter (2015,p.9) insists that

> *"We require a better understanding about what sports and sports' processes produce what impacts, for which participants and in what circumstances".*

Black (2010, p. 122) argues that the recent expansion of sport-for-development policy and practice has not been underpinned by "*critical and theoretically-informed re-flection*" and others have suggested that there is a need to step back and to reflect critically on what we think we know about the impact of sport development projects.(Coakley, 2011; Crabbe, 2008; Tacon & Oughton, 2007).Dwyer *et al* (2015) study into M & E methods for Sport for Development projects (SFD) presents numerous problems. Quoting Kidd's (2008, p.52) statement that "*many funding agencies and decision makers remain sceptical about sports abilities and want to see more empirical justification of their results before they invest*" the study reveals that evaluations focus purely on the positive aspects to please external funders (Bornstein, 2006: Wolff, 2011). The study also identifies that most evaluations are completed by people who are engaged already in the project and want to see it succeed, or 'evangelists' as Levermore (2008) refers to them.

Coalter (2006) notes that most SFD evaluation is based on an outcomes approach, but feels more emphasis must be placed on process-based approach to M & E. Kidd

(2008) suggests that more M & E focus should be placed on long-term benefits and challenges, shifting away from a short-term approach. An area of focus of this research will be investigating the perceived short-term approach to M & E reports within the sport for good sector. Additionally, the use of 'evangelists' to produce impact reports, who may lack critical evaluation skills due to their inability to see past the power of sport, will be investigated (Levermore, 2008; Coalter, 2009). Furthermore, the research will aim to investigate 'over positive' reporting that charities have been accused of, in order to appease funders.

2.8 The Use of Sport for Enhancing Employability

The capability for sport to attract socially deprived young people, and the assumed 'transformational' powers of sport have resulted in sport becoming a popular vehicle for employability-focused charities to use. The ability for sport to deliver learning materials (lessons) in a non-traditional format can make an educational workshop seem more appealing than sitting behind a desk in a classroom based setting (Holt & Neely, 2011). The use of sport for enhancing employability skills is still relatively new to the UK (Walker, 2018). The research of Walker & Hills (2016) identifies the results of sport programmes are still untested, with most participants assuming that by attending a sports based employability programme they would "achieve" a job in sport. An analysis of the literature on the use of sport for enhancing employability skills reveals very little academic research, furthering the justification for this thesis. According to research by Spaaij, Magee and Jeanes (2013) academic analysis of sport and leisure based initiatives aiming to address unemployment has largely been limited

to Glyptis (1989). The thesis will focus heavily, especially across study two, on the use of sport as the hook to improve young people's employability skills (Green, 2008).

Street League (2015) a charity with the aim to change people's lives through football, is an example of how the third sector can use sport to attempt to deliver a 'social impact'. Street League delivers a combined sport and employability programme across the UK to support unemployed young people, aged 16 to 24, who face socio-economic barriers to sustained employment, education and training (Street League Impact Report, 2015). The charity decided to work entirely with young people and to focus on tackling structural youth unemployment.

Street League are a part of a growing number of third sector deliverers who use sport to tackle the growing issue of rising youth employment in the UK (Kicks National Impact Report, 2014; Change Foundation Impact Report, 2014). Their work is measurable, meets a government need and is generally heavily target driven (Breckell *et al*, 2010: Alcock, 2010). Recording employment numbers attributed to their initiatives has become a huge focus for sport charities (Alcock, 2010). This is highlighted by a DCMS quote (Green,2002, p.48) that now sounds very dated in its approach to M & E:

> "*Because employment is something that typically happens after involvement in the project, accurate records tend not to be held by cultural projects of the type considered here* (sport & leisure)".

Impact reports by The Change Foundation (2014), Kicks (2014), and Street League (2014) all detail that they have moved from measuring participation rates to measuring

outcomes, such as the number of NEET's who are now in employment. Case studies on individuals involved in the charity projects use words such as "transformational", "motivational", "engaging", and feature heavily how the confidence and employability skills fostered through sport projects have impacted on a young person's work readiness (The Change Foundation, 2014; Kicks, 2014 & Street League, 2014). A focus on tangible and measurable outcomes, such as people moving from NEET to EET, will give a charity 'hard evidence' to present to stakeholders (Walker et al, 2015). It is this focus on achieving 'hard evidence' (i.e. NEET to EET figures) that Walker *et al* (2015) identify as being extremely difficult. This focus to achieve NEET to EET figures is examined within study two.

Research into the use of sport for employability by Spaaij *et al* (2013), using qualitative methods, reveals a number of issues. These include short-term objectives that are unachievable, poor family support networks for participants and a lack of jobs local to the delivery areas. The programmes also discuss how the delivery teams are under pressure to evidence outcomes. Spaaij et al's (2013) analysis suggests that although sport undoubtedly has value as an alternative medium through which to engage and build relationships with young people, it cannot overcome the wider issues influencing the success of programs aiming to move workless young people into employment. In short, the impact of such programs on worklessness is inevitably limited.

The section will conclude with a focus on the work of Walker (2018). Walker's 2018 research explores a work ready scheme, that utilises rugby, to enhance employability skills with long-term unemployed in Scotland. Walker (2018) acknowledges that her results are still at an exploratory stage (Walker aims to complete a three year

longitudinal study). Walker identifies positives through the SBI researched. These include group harmony, empathy with staff, improvements in mental health and qualifications achieved. However, Walker (2018, p.10) warns that:

> *There is no "magic pill" resulting from these programmes and the very nature of the participants, as being so far away from employment and needing intensive support both personal and skill based, is not always recognised by statutory funders as a complex and long-term process.*

There is a lack of research into how the use of sport can enhance and improve employability skills in the UK. As noted within the review of literature, sport has been assumed to be a positive force on crime reduction, health, social cohesion and social capital (Walseth, 2008). However, to date, only the work of Walker (2018) and Walker & Hills (2016) investigates the use of sport for enhancing employability skills. The thesis will add to this research base.

2.9 Introduction to Sport 4 Life

S4L were founded in 2006, in Ladywood, Birmingham, with the intention of utilising the power of sport for social good. Birmingham has the youngest population of any major European city; over half the population is under 35 years old. Birmingham's population is significantly diverse in terms of ethnic composition. The city has unemployment rates twice the national average, and in some areas over 50 % of the working-age, population is not in employment (Brooks, Kendall & Minton, 2016).

Initially S4L were devised to allow local young people the opportunity to partake in sporting activities in a safe environment. S4L were reliant on grants and donations to

continue and expand their operations. A lot of S4L's early work focused on pure sport delivery in urban environments, mixed in with aspects of informal educational workshops (anti knife crime, alcohol and substance misuse workshops etc.). S4L consisted of participatory activities designed to help divert young people away from anti-social behaviour, an area researched in great detail by Nichols (2007) and Crabbe (2000 & 2006), both of whom questioned the success of such projects and identified that whilst sport is important, it is the relationships formed between mentors and the youth involved that are of highest importance.

In 2010, S4L decided on a strategic change to operate as a "Sports Themed Employability Charity". This resulted in a change of approach, with sport now used as the hook to recruit young people, with the impact that S4L achieved now measured by the number of successful outcomes (primarily NEET to EET). S4L claim that "sport is the ultimate engagement tool" and S4L still deliver free weekly sport sessions that give the organisation a platform to recruit young people on to their programmes. S4L staff work in partnership and aim to achieve referrals from job centres, schools, colleges, other charities, housing associations and youth offending teams.

The strategic change in 2010 resulted in a diversification in funding streams, with S4L navigating towards funding that focused on young people within the Birmingham area securing hard outcomes. Dodd and Moody (2011) identify that charities who are not "outcomes focused" will struggle financially, with a sector switch towards a payment by results culture. Glennon, Hannibal and Meehan's (2017, p47) research revealed that charities experience tensions as the quest for a more *commercially oriented position may conflict with their social imperative.*

S4L identify that:

> *"We engage young people who are far from the job market, living in severe deprivation and in many cases have been involved in anti-social behaviour, gangs and crime. Some are long-term unemployed and many have mental health problems such as anxiety and depression. They are generally disillusioned with the job market and simply don't know how to do a CV or cover letter and go through the application process. Our staff gets to understand each young person through one-to-one mentoring. Sport is also a crucial element as it has a huge effect on self-esteem and confidence. The ultimate goal is to get them job-ready or facilitate pathways into education and training"* (Sport 4 Life Website, 2019)

Figure 2.9 Sport 4 Life Impact Report Infographic

Fig. 2.9 Sport 4 Life Impact Report Infographic

S4L believe that every young person should have the opportunity to create a greater future for themselves. As presented in Fig 2.9 (above), the large majority of S4L participants are born into a cycle of deprivation. This cycle can be extremely difficult to break, and the interventions from S4L are devised to help counteract the barriers that can be in place. As already identified, sport is used as the hook, and Coalter (2013) would identify S4L as a “Sport Plus” operation, in that sport is used as the primary development tool to enhance young people’s employability skills. S4L attendees, particularly on a NEET course, will participate in a multitude of planned workshops, both in a classroom and sports hall environment. The practical delivery and skills developed by the participants, who are tasked with delivering a Sport Leaders Level One qualification, are designed to be transferable to the key skills required in a workplace. Skills such as leadership, communication, team-work,

confidence and punctuality are all worked on in a sport setting or framework. For instance a question such as: “Name a great leader in sport and tell us what you think makes them great?” is used to spark a discussion on leadership, with the S4L course leader relating the qualities listed to the work place.

The use of sport, especially popular sports such as football and cricket, are used by S4L to recruit and educate young people. The majority of young people who attend an S4L course were not engaged in traditional education and may still have negative views on school and college (Brown, 2007), with a high proportion of attendees being expelled from school (Sport4Life, 2018). The use of sport to almost “blend” in learning outcomes, such as identifying leadership skills or debating why a captain should have good communication, is vital for the clientele involved (Gould & Carson, 2008). A traditional “lecture” on skills needed to secure employment could be very off putting for the S4L learners, whereas a “discussion” on sport can ensure that the NEETS in attendance become active and engaged learners (Kay, 2009).

2.9.1 Sport 4 Life Mission Statement

S4L (2018,p.5) state that they are “proud to create better futures for young people aged 12 to 29 by improving their employability and key life skills, through our sports-themed personal development programmes. Our delivery programmes provide targeted activities that are proven to deliver life-changing impact”. S4L programme delivery is two-fold:

- **A proactive and strategic intervention to unemployment (TEENS programme)**

  AND

- **A reactive intervention and support service to those currently unemployed (NEETS programme)**

Sport 4 Life offer two core services for their participants, dependent on their age or need. These are classified as:

TEENS – this 10-week programme for 12-16-year-olds is a proactive intervention for young people highlighted as at-risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). It focuses on life skills development through sport, plus training, coaching and leadership qualifications, underpinned by one-to-one mentoring support.

NEETS – this programme supports 16-29-year-olds who are already NEET, developing their employability and life skills, and helping get them into sustained, education, training or employment. This includes qualifications, structured sport sessions, formal mock interviews and workshops.

Both programmes use sport to boost motivation, self-esteem, communication, behaviour and teamwork, while classroom activity leads to accredited qualifications and enhanced skillsets that boost young people's prospects of future employment (Sport 4 Life, 2018). With the TEENS programme a lot of focus is around how young people can use basic sport qualifications to enhance their post 16 educational or employment opportunities. Career advice is offered and work is conducted on lifestyle choices and how they can affect a future career. Research by Armour, Sandford and Duncombe (2013) has highlighted that the use of sport and mentoring can have a positive effect on young people's lives. S4L acknowledge that more longitudinal research should be conducted to assess the impact of their

preventive work with TEENS within the Birmingham area (Sport4Life, 2018). Snippets from case studies from TEENS participants detail the "*confidence gained from securing a qualification and the chance to not just hang around the streets up to no good"* (Sport4Life, 2018). Green (2009) and Nicholls (2010) have both conducted extensive research on the impact that sport, when used well as a diversion, can achieve on teenagers living in areas of high crime rates.

The NEETS programme aims to work with young people from Birmingham who are "the furthest away from the job market" (Tunstall *et al*, 2012). S4L course attendees may have been long term unemployed and struggling to break away from living on benefits, suffered from substance abuse and may have a criminal record (Gilbert & Van Voorhis, 2003). For some young people a multitude of reasons are preventing them from gaining employment or further training (Russell, 2016). Research from Furlong (2006) and Yates & Payne (2006) identifies that young people (school leavers) now face a transitional job market, with traditional post 16 jobs becoming harder to find due to changes in the labour market. Pemberton's (2008) research into NEET's in Merseyside (an area similar to Birmingham in terms of mass youth unemployment), also discusses the lack of employment options and the multitude of constraints that can affect a young person's ability to gain employment. Avila and Rose (2019) identify gaining qualifications and establishing a regular working pattern as essential criteria for a NEETS course. Simmons (2015) work discusses how NEETS can be very untrusting of anyone in authority and building a rapport with a staff member can be the most difficult task.

The work of S4L has been recognised by the sport and charity sector, with awards for impact and growth listed among others on the S4L website. S4L were awarded the

Outstanding Impact Award – West Midlands by the Lloyds Bank Foundation at their 2015 Charity Awards for their work with young people and their processes for showcasing their impact. More recently, S4L were named winners of the European Lotteries Sport Award for 2018.The Sport Award is for non-for-profit organisations that have produced substantial work and tangible results within the field of sport, and most specifically within the wider area of sport for societal change (Connect Sport, 2018). Recognition in the form of awards, affiliations and memberships of professional organisations and accreditations from industry are all testaments to the high standards that S4L set with regards their charity governance and commitment to showcasing valid and trustworthy impact (Manville & Greatbanks, 2016).

2.9.2 Sport 4 Life Intervention-Get Fit 4 Employment

The S4L NEETS are enrolled onto a five-week employability course that is conducted in small groups. These courses are given the working title Get Fit 4 Employment (GF4E). Whilst S4L work from partnership referrals as well as individuals registering, the NEETS course is voluntary and not used as a form of sanctioning (where a job centre deducts payment from a NEET) by the job centre. Each attendee must *want* to be there and commit to five weeks. The courses are incentivised, through a £100 post-completion bursary (to be used to help boost employability, i.e. new suit, driving lessons, skills related course). The course features a mix of both practical and academic lessons, with each attendee completing a Sport Leaders Level One, an OCR Employability Level One Qualification, a mock interview and a peer group designed social action project. In 2017/18 S4L were delivering in several wards across Birmingham (Appendix One).

The course is very similar to an employability programme evaluated by Walker, Hills and Heere (2017). Walker *et al.* (2017, p.67) evaluation identified that:

> *From the interviews and our observations, it was apparent the programmatic outcome sought by both the financial institution and the soccer foundation was employability using sport as the "hook." Yet, while both organizations agreed there was a bigger goal than sport participation to be accomplished, they were unclear about the actual role of sport in this program. And, moreover, they were seemingly unclear about how sport could help with accomplishing employability outcomes.*

Walker *et al*. (2017) also report that more work is needed pre-course, especially around young people's aspirations for attending a course. Potential applicants and this will apply to S4L, need reminding that these courses are to teach employability skills through sport, not to solely teach people skills for *jobs in sport* (Walker *et al*, 2017). The use of the name Sport in the title of S4L can be misleading to both participants and referral partners, with the assumption that S4L only offer support for young people looking to navigate towards the sport sector. The S4L delivery model is shown in more detail in Appendix Two.

S4L aim to increase a young person's employability factor by ensuring that they:

- Gain qualifications (OCR Level One, Sport Leaders Level One, Basic First Aid)
- Learn employability skills (CV Writing, Mock Interviews)

- Progress from NEET to EET (Either through formal and evidenced employment or into further training/college/university).

S4L currently measure their work against their six organisational objectives, which are to support disadvantaged young people to:

1. Gain qualifications
2. Progress from NEET (not in education, employment, or training) to EET
3. Reduce their offending
4. Transform their behaviour
5. Improve their self esteem
6. Increase their resilience

Birmingham has the worst unemployment rates in the country. More people are claiming Jobseekers Allowance, the benefit paid to unemployed people, in Ladywood (the base for S4L) than anywhere else (Birmingham Mail, 2017). A breakdown of claimants by every Parliamentary constituency in the UK shows that four out of the five places with the worst numbers are in Birmingham. In Ladywood there are 5,767 people claiming the allowance, or 5.9 per cent of the population aged 16 to 64 (Birmingham Mail, 2017). Birmingham has the highest rate of youth unemployment in the UK (Brooks, Kendall & Milton, 2016). Since the 1960's Birmingham has suffered from a lack of manufacturing jobs and a decline in industry (Murie, 2018). The amount of young people aged 18-24 who are unemployed in Birmingham has risen from 16% in 2017 to 20% in 2018 (Birmingham Mail, 2017).

Traditional “back to work” courses or further training can be off putting to NEETS (Gilbert & Van Voorhis, 2017). Using sport as an engagement tool means that S4L can continue to entice NEETS onto their courses who may be unwilling to complete a typical back to work course (Crabbe, 2006). A systematic review by Mawn *et al.* (2017) found that found that high intensity multi-component interventions, featuring classroom and job-based training, appear to increase employment amongst NEETs by 4% compared to controls. The high numbers of unemployed people in Birmingham, both those known to local authorities and the “Hidden NEETS” (Maguire, 2015), further support that the service that S4L provide is certainly needed (Wilson, 2013). S4L continue to work with unemployed people defined as the hardest to help, with whom historically the third sector has been most associated. However, as discussed later in the thesis, can S4L still work with Birmingham’s’ most disadvantaged when they have funders targets to achieve?

Currently S4L attempt to measure their impact through both quantitative and qualitative measures. The following quantitative measures are taken from the S4L impact report from their website (Sport 4 Life, 2018):

Impact

In 2016/17, S4L report that 929 young people (83% BAME; 765 males, 164 females) engaged with S4L, with 400 completing programmes. Of those, 141 completed the TEENs programme, 167 the NEETs programme and 92 meaningfully engaged in sports sessions and mentoring. Overall, those 400 young people achieved a combined 787 outcomes – 351 transformed at least one life skill, 262 gained at least

one accredited qualification and, most importantly for S4L, 174 progressed from NEET to EET, with 67 achieving a sustained job outcome.

This form of quantitative reporting is vital for a charity such as S4L to evidence their impact according to a report by Cordery and Sinclair (2013). Cordery and Sinclair's (2013) research identified that funders need to see clear numerical breakdowns of impact, with defined targets evidencing an achieved impact (or not). Research from Metcalf (2013, p.9) identified that charities must have an impact measurement in place that is *"compatible with their budget, expertise, time, organisational sixe and purpose".* Reporting on outcomes and outputs by using validated numerical data can be a cost effective and efficient method of evidencing impact (Moxham & Boaden, 2007).

Collating data on outcomes (such as Sports Leaders annual course completion) can be relatively straightforward; the impact hard to measure is the claim by S4L to transform life skills. S4L claim to "Transform Life Skills" in the following areas: Teamwork, Motivation, Self-esteem, Behaviour and Communication. Measuring the "impact" that S4L can achieve on transforming life skills is very difficult, with complexities and additional constraints (such as period of unemployment, substance misuse, being a lone parent etc.) on a S4L attendee all having an effect (Holt, 2016). S4L plan and deliver sessions with the aim of ensuring NEET attendees can focus on and "improve" the life skills listed above. S4L cannot control any external influences that may be having a detrimental effect on a young person, i.e. living in extreme poverty, living in care, mental health issues, breakdowns of relationships or a disruptive social network (Damm & Dustmann, 2014). It is a very difficult task to evidence how someone may have improved the life skills listed above. Kay (2007),

Bailey (2007) and Fraser-Thomas *et al.* (2007) have all explored the use of sports powers to build life skills in adolescents, and all summarise that capturing a transformation and evidencing the impact is complicated by a multitude of complex issues.

S4L currently rely on two methods to record and showcase their impact on transforming life skills; case studies and outcome star. Case studies are when a young person will have their journey detailed by S4L, generally through a recorded interview between a young person who has been on a S4L course and a member of staff. Case studies are a very powerful tool for attracting funders, as they are an immediately accessible way of displaying an influential impact (Connolly & Hyndman, 2013). A case study generally will attempt to display a complete journey (NEET to EET) for a young person, attributing some of the success down to the intervention that S4L has helped with.

Successful S4L alumni who have featured in case studies detail how their "confidence and self-esteem" has improved, allowing them a greater opportunity to enter the workplace (Sport 4 Life, 2018). Case studies are promoted easily via social media channels, potentially attracting new beneficiaries and funders (Lucas, 2017). A case study can also be a very important method for establishing "trust" between donors and charities, evidencing that a charity are achieving success with their cohorts (Hyndman & McConville, 2018). Case studies are shared via the S4L website, press releases and impact reports. However, case studies can be criticised for being too individualistic, or constructed more for marketing purposes than to actually learn from what worked for that clientele and how. Further criticisms of case studies can be that

they only reflect the ‘best image’ of the charity, not the realities of the typical participants (Dey & Gibbon, 2017).

The second measure that S4L use to capture life skill changes is the Outcome Star. The Outcome Star is an industry recognised data capture tool completed electronically or via a paper version. The Outcome Star is completed by the service user, who scores themselves on a measurement of 1 to 5, with the S4L member of staff asking questions to prompt a reply and inputting the numbers (Appendix Three). S4L staff and the service user discuss all the areas of the service user’s life which are represented on the Star and agree where they are on each scale. These readings are inputted on to the Star to give an overview of their current situation. When the process is repeated some time later, the difference in the two readings provides a picture of change (MacKeith, 2011). Research by Petersen and Lorenz (2014), and Harris and Andrews (2013), found that completing an Outcome Star increases the effectiveness and consistency of key work and promotes client change.

S4L use the Youth Star version of Outcome Star, which discusses and measures the following six areas:

1. Making a difference
2. Hopes & dreams
3. Well-being
4. Education & work
5. Communicating
6. Choices & behaviour

The Outcome Star allows S4L the use of both qualitative and quantitative data to evidence their impact. The qualitative data issued from the interviews conducted to complete a star reading, with the S4L staff member recording any significant discussions and saving them to the service users star. The Outcome Star can be the first time that a S4L member of staff will have been able to discuss a service user's background and needs. The quantitative data can be measured by comparing the results of two individual stars (or even across a multitude of stars) to track any numerical progressions or regressions across a section of the star.

The Outcome Star is used by S4L to set personal goals and targets for young people, especially if a young person or a S4L staff member has noticed an area for development. The service user will then conduct another Outcome Star (generally conducted with a four-week gap in between for developmental purposes) and will reflect and re-score themselves. The Outcome Star can be re-visited on multiple occasions, and can be utilised to enter action plans and completion dates, for both the service user and S4L staff to complete (i.e. CV to be completed and checked).

2.10 Foucauldian Power Discourse

This section will argue that a Foucauldian framework will help to organise and implement the data collected; allowing for a broad understanding of the power relations and struggles that can exist within the charity sector, a sector that faces a constant battle to evidence it's wider impact on society. Foucault's notion of power not only shapes behaviour but seeks also to direct individuals toward the attainment of a specific goal or aim (Manley, 2012).

Alternative social theories considered for this research included the work on social interaction by Goffman (Parker & Manley, 2017). The key conceptual themes put forward by Goffman (1961) on organisational restriction and control could have offered a lens to view the research. Hacking (2011) suggests that Foucault's work and Erving Goffman's interpersonal sociology are complementary. Both are essential for understanding how classifications of people interact with the people classified (Hacking, 2011). Additionally, but to a lesser extent, Marxist capitalist theory (Carrington & McDonald, 2008), was a social theory considered. The work of Carrington & McDonald (2008) contains examples of Marxist capitalist theory in sport and leisure studies, however upon reflection it was decided to be not appropriate for this research. Lastly, the work of Bourdieu, identified through the work of Kitchin and Howe (2013) was considered. Kitchin and Howe (2013) recommend adopting a longitudinal, critical, and ethnographic approach for a more nuanced understanding of how complex phenomena impact on the management of sport. After researching and contemplating alternative social theories it was decided the research will be conducted through the use of Foucault's (1982) notion of power as an analytical lens.

As discussed in more detail later in the paper, the in-depth and exhaustive period the researcher spent completing Action Research at S4L, allowed a greater opportunity to experience and witness a power struggle between the "suits" and "tracksuits". The M & E data collectors and the senior management team (SMT) are tasked with implementing and analysing the M & E data to evidence an impact and attain future funding. "Tracksuits" and "Suits" are slang terms used in the sports industry to quickly explain the general focus of a staff members role. Describing a staff member as a tracksuit implies that they are very hands on and in engaged in

practical delivery (Coalter, 2007). Describing a staff member as a suit has the implication that they work in a non-delivery role, generally in an executive and strategic post. The disparity and micro-conflict between these roles is discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

Evidencing an impact to funders and external stakeholders is vitally important with a shift in the charity sector, and especially at S4L, to a PBR (payment by results) culture (Hyndman, 2017). S4L can no longer acquire funding purely for sports sake, there must be sustainable outcomes attached. Results, primarily from NEET to EET are paramount to funding and growth (Harlock, 2014). A Foucauldian analysis of the power context at S4L will allow the thesis to examine the dynamic relationship between the two working groups (Manley, 2012). Both groups need each other to exist and grow, but seem to have very contrasting views on how easy it is to collect and upload M & E.

As far as this power is concerned, it is first necessary to distinguish how power is exerted over things and gives the ability to modify, use, consume, or destroy them-a power which stems from aptitudes directly inherent in the body or relayed by external instruments. Foucault states this is a question of "capacity" (Shiner, 1982). On the other hand, what characterises the power we are analysing is that it brings into play relations between individuals (or between groups). If we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose that certain persons exercise power over others (Phillips, 2017). The term "power" designates relationships between partners, or in the third sector's case, funding partners and senior management (Milbourne & Cushman, 2013). This research will build upon Casey's (2002) investigation of the power struggles that the third sector faces, with the funders holding all of the power.

The words of Foucault, cited by Shiner (1982, p.387):

> *The application of objective capacities in their most elementary forms implies relationships of communication (whether in the form of previously acquired information or of shared work); it is tied also to power relations (whether they consist of obligatory tasks, of gestures imposed by tradition or apprenticeship, of subdivisions and the more or less obligatory distribution of labour)….They can scarcely be dissociated from activities brought to their final term, be they those which permit the exercise of this power (such as training techniques, processes of domination, the means by which obedience is obtained) or those, which in order to develop their potential, call upon relations of power (the division of labour and the hierarchy of tasks).*

To understand power relations, Foucault (2002, p.54) contended that it was necessary to examine discourses, which he argued were “practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak” . Discourses therefore do more than describe things, they are practices which structure and shape our social world, and “constrain what can be said, who can say it and how people may act and conceive of their own agency and subjectivity” (Parker, 1994). Discourses can reproduce power relations, through the construction of knowledge and truths which guide societal practices. For Foucault (1982), discourse, knowledge and power were inextricably linked:

> *There are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production,*

> *accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association.* (Foucault, 1980 p.93).

Foucault's (1982) notion of power partly functions through the relationship between target-driven activities and systems of communication (Manley, Palmer & Roderick, 2012). A complex power relation may originate from individuals sharing and distributing information. This particular form of power is nearly always directed towards an aim or desired end (Manley *et al*, 2012). Foucault (1994b, p.338) identifies that:

> *Power relations are exercised, to an exceedingly important extent, through the production and exchange of signs; and they are scarcely separable form goal directed activities that permit the exercise of power (such as training techniques, process of domination, the means by which obedience is obtained).*

Harris and Adams (2016) used the ideas of Foucault as thinking tools in order to consider how power in the process of M & E enables and/or constrains the privileging and legitimising of particular knowledge. In agreemant with Nicholls *et al.* (2010), Harris and Adams's (2016, p. 101) argue that what counts for evaluation data in Sport for Development work is set by funders and policy makers and that "*There are many prescriptive evidence approaches that practitioners are expected to follow without sufficient resource or time afforded".* Harris and Adams (2016) suggest that a deeper examination of the evidence dynamics at a practical level are needed, and this is an area that this thesis will attempt to explore, especially the practical collection of M & E and the power dynamic between suits and tracksuits.

2.11 Revisit of Research Questions

The literature review will now revisit the original research questions, summarise the academic work on M & E of programmes, outcomes and impacts, and identify the gaps this research will aim to address. The questions are presented individually and discussed:

What perspectives are prevalent across third sector sports organisations with regards to their use and application of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques?

Sport has historically felt little or no need to evaluate its effectiveness (2009). Sport has been viewed as morally good for centuries, with sport evangelists confident in the many positives attached through participation in sport (Coalter, 2009). However, the third sector is now under increasing pressure to greater evidence impact, especially with regards the use of sport to boost employability skills (Alcock, 2010). Monitoring and evaluation has been an exercise used to appease funders, and traditionally reported through outputs, as opposed to outcomes achieved (Newcomer, 2015). M & E has also been described as a burden, taking away precious time from sport participation (Smith & Waddington, 2004). The thesis will aim to explore, in detail, if negative attitudes towards M & E still exist.

How can sport for good charities greater evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation?

Evidencing their social impact can result in sport for good charities improving their chances to receive funding (Harlock, 2013). How they achieve this evidence is hard

to confirm, and will be an area of focus for the thesis. The research to date suggests impact reports, press releases, case studies and social return on investment ratios are popular methods (Metcalf, 2016). By knowing what works for whom and where (collated through the use of M & E), sport for good charities will be able to build up an evidence base that will display their social impact (Coalter, 2012). Moving away from measuring outputs to a method that greater understands outcomes is a method suggested by Lynch-Cerullo and Cooney (2011), and this research will aim to investigate this further.

What are the challenges and opportunities of Monitoring and Evaluation for a medium sized sport for development charity in the third sector?

Research suggests that charities struggle with the workload required for funders M & E requirements (Kay, 2012). Further challenges include the participant's willingness (or lack of) to engage with M & E, the circumstances of the delivery (sporting venues without appropriate classrooms etc.) and the clientele (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Coalter, 2012). A further challenge can be the lack of intrinsic motivation for a session deliverer to do more than 'count heads' (Haudenhuyse, Nols & Theeboom, 2013). The opportunities include; a greater understanding on how sport can improve young people's life skills, staff developing their M & E skills and learning more about the mystical powers of sport (Mellor, 2015). These challenges and opportunities will be explored throughout the theses, especially the mind-set towards M & E from delivery staff.

2.11.1 Literature Review Summary

This review has discussed and analysed the literature that has shaped the research thus far. The review of literature has highlighted key authors and research, both academic research and practitioner focused research, which will be constant points of reference throughout the thesis. The literature review has emphasised how wide ranging the terms ‘Monitoring & Evaluation’ and ‘Impact’ can be and how they can directly impact the third sector. In particular, the lack of research into impact, and how sport has (and can) be used to attempt to combat a multitude of societal problems is paramount for this thesis. The thesis will now look at the methodology used throughout the research.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction to Methodology

This chapter will now discuss the methodology chosen for the study and will introduce the strengths and limitations of the selected methodology. The chapter will begin by introducing qualitative research, and then discuss epistemology and ontology. The chapter will discuss the methods chosen for data collection purposes for study one and study two. The appropriateness of Grounded Theory (GT) for data analysis precedes the conclusion of the chapter that focuses on the relevance and use of Action Research (AR). The methodology has been influenced by the use of AR, especially in work by Richardson, Gilbourne & Littlewood (2004), Parnell (2014) and Burnett (2008).

3.2 Qualitative Research

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) assert that qualitative research emphasises the process of discovering how the social meaning is constructed and stress the relationship between the investigator and the topic studied. Qualitative research is an interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meaning people give to the phenomena within their social setting (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Moser & Korstjens, 2013). Qualitative research should be chosen when there are no variables to measure, no formulas to test and when material is required to provide further insight into the topic area (Cresswell, 1994).

The literature review presents views on M & E from academic experts, private and public sector researchers and Government white papers; but in order to add real depth to the study a qualitative approach that utilised semi structured interviews with industry insiders was selected as the most appropriate and suitable method (for study one). Hardy *et al*. (1996, p.256) summarise the goal of the research for this study by acknowledging the power of qualitative research to *"obtain rich, in-depth and detailed information from an insider's view*". The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation in qualitative research, differing greatly from quantitative research that attempts to gather data objectively (Gratton & Jones, 2010). As discussed further in detail (see 3.5, Introduction to Action Research), the qualitative research continues with an Action Research period.

3.3 Epistemology & Ontology

This section will now detail to the reader the epistemological and ontological viewpoints that were utilised to complete the research. I will firstly introduce epistemology, before focusing on the interpretivism approach. The section will conclude by analysing the role of the researcher when conducting qualitative research.

Hofer (2000) defines epistemology as being concerned with the origin, nature, limits, methods, and justification of human knowledge. Epistemology is the theory of knowledge, especially with regard to its methods, validity, and scope, and the distinction between justified belief and opinion (Steup & Neta, 2005).

Epistemology poses the following questions: What is the relationship between the knower and what is known? How do we know what we know? What counts as knowledge? In the positivist paradigm, the object of study is independent of researchers; knowledge is discovered and verified through direct observations or measurements of phenomena and facts are established by taking apart a phenomenon to examine its component parts (Krauss, 2005). An alternative view, the naturalist or constructivist view, is that knowledge is established through the meanings attached to the phenomena studied; researchers interact with the subjects of study to obtain data; inquiry changes both researcher and subject; and knowledge is context and time dependent (Coll & Chapman, 2000; Cousins, 2002).

A paradigm is a perspective or 'world view' that identifies the nature of (social) being or existence (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and the researched or nature of knowledge (epistemology}, and the methodologies employed to gather the data to answer a research question (Sparkes, 1992; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Morris, 2006). Any process of formal inquiry is guided by a collection of beliefs and conventions, which for a particular field of study *"influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how results should be interpreted"* (Bryman, 1992, p 4). These beliefs underpin the form of the inquiry and are shaped by three questions· what IS the nature of knowledge or reality (ontology); what IS the relationship between the researcher and knowledge (epistemology), and how the enquirer should go about finding out knowledge (methodology) (Guba, 1990).

The paradigmatic positioning of a researcher therefore dictates a study's fundamental theoretical framework. The methodologies employed should be in unison with the

perceived ways in which the researcher believes we gain knowledge about the world and reality, informed by their fundamental ontological and related epistemological beliefs (Wheatley, 2007). Hay (2007) stresses that a researcher must be consistent with their epistemological and ontological approaches and acknowledge how they will impact on the research undertaken.

Gratton and Jones (2004, p.28) warn that, "*It is relatively easy to become immersed within the complex issues of ontology and epistemology. In reality, the key question to ask is what approach will best suit my research?"* In answer to this question posed by Gratton and Jones, the researcher used an interpretive paradigm, as it was deemed the most suitable and appropriate method for this study. The justification for this is detailed below.

3.3.1 Interpretivism

Researchers who adopt the ontological and epistemological assumptions of interpretivism, are of the opinion that the social sciences, unlike the natural sciences, do not deal with a succession of inorganic and impassive objects that are independent and external to the individual (Sparkes, 1992). The interpretive paradigm contests the objective reality assumed by the positivist view of the world and seeks alternative means of making sense of reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Patton, 1990).

Lincoln (1995) accepts and acknowledges that the presence, the effect and the biases and selections of the researcher, cannot be removed from interpretive research. By adopting an interpretivism perspective, the ability to generalise or predict an outcome of an investigation is eradicated (O'Donoghue, 2006). An interpretative paradigm

(within the overarching term qualitative research) rejects the notion that universal truths can be uncovered, arguing that individual behaviour is based on intentions and beliefs within context-rich and situated realties (Williams, 2008). Research using an interpretative paradigm does not attempt to "prove" a theory but merely to add knowledge to an area of research, by selecting an appropriate methodology to explore a phenomenon (Galdes, 2012).

The research for this study was located in the interpretive paradigm for key reasons. The research aimed to provide a perspective on the use of M & E by charities who work in the sport development (or Sport for Good) sector. The research involved working with "gatekeepers" (Parnell, 2014) who had the knowledge and experience to share essential information with the researcher. It was imperative to determine the reasons behind the thoughts, beliefs and mind-sets of the experts involved in this study. The interpretive approach accepts a multitude of realities exist but asserts that only the individuals themselves can provide insights into the thoughts and beliefs of the subject matter at hand (Galdes, 2012). The information could only be determined through an interpretive paradigm positioning that delves into the participants viewpoints (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Kelliher (2011,p.123) warns that while interpretive research is recognised for its value in providing contextual depth, results are often criticised in terms of validity, reliability and the ability to generalise, referred to collectively as research legitimisation. Kelliher's (2011, p.124) work advises that legitimisation of an interpretive case study is improved when an integrative approach involving the combination of specific research techniques to relevant and appropriate standards is adopted. This research

will be studying human relations, professional decisions and social interactions, all subjects that will be difficult to measure and define in a quantifiable manner (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The researcher's role in this qualitative study was integral, with the researcher acting as the primary data collection tool (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The researcher, as explained in the positionality chapter, brought a set of epistemological beliefs, values and experiences that impacted on the study (Becker, 1996). In agreement, Tracy (2012) acknowledges that a researcher's background, values and beliefs fundamentally shape the way researchers approach and conduct research. Blumer (1969) states that all social scientists, implicitly or explicitly, attribute a point of view and interpretations to the people whose actions they analyse. It is vital that the researcher's epistemological viewpoint is explained and any potential biases openly discussed (Becker, 1996). Qualitative research is 'measured' using words, statements and other non-numerical measures, collecting data from the viewpoint of the participant (Elliot & Timulak, 2005). The researcher, who attempts to uncover meanings, values and explanations, then interprets the data. One of the strengths of the interpretive approach is that such an approach allows the researcher to gain an insider's perspective, to try to understand the subjects 'from within' (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation in qualitative research, differing greatly from quantitative research which attempts to gather data objectively (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

3.4 Grounded Theory Approach

The following section will discuss the theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical concepts and methods for completing Grounded Theory (GT) will be introduced. The justification towards a GT approach will be discussed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The strengths and weaknesses of GT will be analysed. The concepts of Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) and the significance for this study will be reviewed.

During its forty-year history, GT has served as a major method for conducting emergent qualitative research. Charmaz (2009) identifies an emergent method as inductive, indeterminate, and open-ended. An emergent method begins with the empirical world and builds an inductive understanding of it as knowledge accrues. Social scientists who use emergent methods can study research problems that arise in the empirical world and can pursue unanticipated directions of inquiry in this world. Emergent methods are particularly well suited for studying uncharted, contingent, or dynamic phenomena. These methods also allow for new properties of the studied phenomenon to appear that, in turn, shape new conditions and consequences to be studied (Charmaz, 2009). This thesis aims to explore new theoretical and practical concepts linked in to the area of study, making GT a suitable selection.

GT provides a detailed, rigorous, and systematic method of analysis, which has the advantage of reserving the need for the researcher to conceive preliminary hypotheses. It therefore provides the researcher with greater freedom to explore the research area and allow issues to emerge (Bryant, 2002; Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2001). Consequently, GT is useful in providing rigorous insight into areas that are

relatively unknown by the researcher (Jones & Alony, 2011). Again, this freedom to explore emergent issues is one of the major factors behind selecting and utilising this method.

According to Charmaz (1996) the distinguishing characteristics of GT methods (Charmaz, 1983, 1990; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1 967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss and Corbin, 1993) include a simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis phases of research. A creation of analytic codes and categories developed from data, not from preconceived hypotheses. The development of middle-range theories to explain behaviour and processes. Memo-making, which is, writing analytic notes to explicate and fill out categories, the crucial intermediate step between coding data and writing first drafts of papers. Theoretical sampling, that is, sampling for theory construction, not for representativeness of a given population, to check and refine the analyst's emerging conceptual categories. Lastly, the delay of the literature review.

Charmaz's (1996) method, or six-point action plan, was adapted from above, with the only change being the placement of the literature review. For this study, in order to allow the researcher to gain a level of knowledge that was sufficient to converse during semi-structured interviews, the literature review was conducted at the onset. However, in agreement with Charmaz (1996), the researcher does refer back to the literature, as stated above, when analysing and comparing data.

Thomas and James (2006) identify that GT, and other techniques of analysis in qualitative inquiry, are bound to be popular, because they meet a need; for while qualitative inquiry is valid, it is difficult to complete. In qualitative studies, it may involve

talking, as naturally as possible, with groups, individuals, teachers; it may entail taking part, watching and listening, in schools and other environments. This can lead a researcher with an abundance of unstructured data, through various formats (field notes, transcriptions, recordings etc.). GT offers a solution: a set of procedures, and a means of generating theory. As such, it has become widely used and has developed as an accessible and thoroughly explained method in qualitative inquiry (Thomas & James, 2006).

In order to use GT effectively, the researcher adopted a non-traditional state of mind (Jones & Alony, 2011). Fernández and Lehmann (2005, p. 9) provided a list of seven principles – drawn from Glaser – to assist researchers in their adoption of Grounded Theory: Tolerate confusion—there is no need to know a priori and no need to force the data. Tolerate regression—the researcher might get briefly 'lost' before finding his or her way. Trust emerging data without worrying about justification—the data will provide the justification if the researcher adheres to the rigor of the method.
Have someone to talk to—Grounded Theory demands moments of isolation to get deep in data analysis and moments of consultation and discussion. Be open to emerging evidence that may change the way the researcher thought about the subject matter, and to act on the new evidence. Be able conceptualise to derive theory from the data. Be creative—devising new ways of obtaining and handling data, combining the approach of others, or using a tested approach in a different way.

Charmaz (2009) identifies that as GT relies on emergence, researchers should remain open to what happens in their research sites and settings. Narrow research problems and research questions seldom work until a grounded theorist has established intimate

familiarity (Blumer, 1969; Lofland & Lofland, 1995) with the research topic or site. This intimate familiarity with the topic gives grounded theorists a window to see emergent processes in their data, allowing them to pursue a specific research problem that addresses these processes (Charmaz, 2009). At its best, GT provides methods to explicate an empirical process in ways that prompt seeing beyond it. By sticking closely to the leads and explicating the relevant process, the researcher can go deeper into meaning and action than given in words. Thus, the focused inquiry of GT with its progressive inductive analysis moves the work theoretically and covers more empirical observations than other approaches. In this way, a focused GT portrays a picture of the whole research studied (Charmaz, 2005).

Adopting a GT approach to this study allowed the researcher the opportunity to show no pre-conceived hypothesis, or set patterns of conformity or behaviours to identify (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The research unfolded in a natural setting, with the qualitative methods chosen (observation, semi-structured interviews, informal interviews, extensive field notes, reflective journal) allowing the data to inform the theoretical perspective, as opposed to the alternative.

The GT method can be incorrectly believed to mean fieldwork must be completed before a literature review has been conducted but this is a misconception of the original premise put forward by Glaser & Strauss (1967, p. 169) who encouraged researchers to “use any material bearing in the area”. This is taken to include the writings of other authors. Strauss & Corbin (1998) saw the use of literature as a basis of professional knowledge and referred to it as literature sensitivity and Dey (1993, p. 66) saw it as “*accumulated knowledge*”. The researcher conducted a thorough and detailed

literature review to inform content knowledge on the current workings and procedures in the third sector. A review of the relevant literature established a knowledge base in the areas of M & E and the importance for charities to identify and evidence their social impact. However, this literature review did not lead to any hypotheses of sufficient interest. Combine this with the fact that GT investigates actualities in the real world (which this study was very much a part of) and the grounded theory approach was appropriate for this research;

> *One must remember that because **emergence** is the foundation of our approach to theory building, a researcher cannot enter an investigation with a list of preconceived concepts, a guiding theoretical framework, or a well thought out design. Concepts and design must be allowed to emerge from the data* (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 34, original emphasis).

Glaser & Strauss (1967) emphasis that the researcher should have "*no preconceived ideas*" when collecting and analysing data. However, as identified by GT work conducted by Allan (2003), there had to be some agenda for research by interview. It is clearly not possible to investigate specific working practices in UK industry without some focus to work toward but this is not what Glaser & Strauss meant. They were referring to preconceived bias, dogma and mental baggage, which, in this case, may be taken to be preconceived ideas about working practices embedded in the researcher's mind (Glaser, 2002). Interviews were therefore focused using open stimuli such as "Tell me about the working practices to do with M & E" or "What happens when you are conducting an evaluation?" Extra time then had to be accounted for the analysis as the interview transcripts were voluminous (Allan, 2003).

There are now two fundamental schools for GT: the Glaserian School and the Straussian School (Stern, 1994), the differences between these are many, and in cases minor (Jones & Alony, 2011). The major differences, however, can have an important impact in the direction and execution of the primary research. Glaser takes the stance that researchers should have an empty mind, while Strauss permits a general idea of the area under study. Glaser leads with the principle that theory should emerge, while Strauss uses structured questions to lead a more forced emergence of theory. These differences and others are detailed below in Table One:

Table One: Glaserian principles vs Straussian Principles for Grounded Theory (Onions, 2006)

‘GLASERIAN’	‘STRAUSSIAN’
Beginning with general wonderment (an empty mind)	Having a general idea of where to begin
Emerging theory, with neutral questions	Forcing the theory, with structured questions
Development of a conceptual theory	Conceptual description (description of situations)
Theoretical sensitivity (the ability to perceive variables and relationships) comes from immersion in the data	Theoretical sensitivity comes from methods and tools
The theory is grounded in the data	The theory is interpreted by an observer
The credibility of the theory, or verification, is derived from its grounding in the data	The credibility of the theory comes from the rigour of the method
A basic social process should be identified	Basic social processes need not be identified
The researcher is passive, exhibiting disciplined restraint	The researcher is active
Data reveals the theory	Data is structured to reveal the theory
Coding is less rigorous, a constant comparison of incident to incident, with neutral questions and categories and properties evolving. Take care not to ‘over-conceptualise’, identify key points	Coding is more rigorous and defined by technique. The nature of making comparisons varies with the coding technique. Labels are carefully crafted at the time. Codes are derived from ‘micro-analysis which consists of analysis data word-by-word’
Two coding phases or types, simple (fracture the data then conceptually group it) and substantive (open or selective, to produce categories and properties)	Three types of coding, open (identifying, naming, categorising and describing phenomena), axial (the process of relating codes to each other) and selective (choosing a core category and relating other categories to that)
Regarded by some as the only ‘true’ GTM	Regarded by some as a form of qualitative data analysis (QDA)

Table One: Glaserian principles vs Straussian Principles for Grounded Theory (Onions, 2006)

The research described in this thesis in principal adopts the former methodology, that of Glaser, however it must be noted not in its entirety. The work of Strauss, in particular the concepts of having a general idea of where to begin, and the role of an

active researcher were paramount to the methodology of this study. The research, in conclusion with Strauss, did have a “general idea of where to begin”, whilst at the same time no pre-conceived ideas were formed (Onions, 2006). The general idea, per se, was to identify how the Third Sector uses M & E techniques to evidence their social impact. Whilst it could be argued that the researcher did enter the research field with “A general wonderment, or an empty mind” (Glaser, 1994), the framing of the study was certainly more aligned with the Straussian viewpoint. Additionally, due to the setting of the research (explained in detail in the methodology section), the researcher was certainly “Active”, again in alignment with Strauss’s Grounded Theory beliefs.

The use of grounded theory, within a constructivist paradigm, has been identified as a strong methodology (Charmaz, 2000, 2001, 2006, Appleton & King, 2002; Annells, 1996, 1997, Mills, Bonner & Francis, 2006). A constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the co-construction of meaning through the subjective interrelationship of researcher and participant (Mills *et al*, 2006). Indeed, Mills *et al* (2006) have argued that a Constructivist Grounded Theory therefore represents an 'evolved' grounded theory, in which the researcher is recognised as an active agent within the research process (Williams, 2008).

Charmaz (2008) constructionist approach makes the following assumptions:
Reality is multiple, processual, and constructed—but constructed under particular conditions. The research process emerges from interaction. It takes into account the researcher’s positionality, as well as that of the research participants.The researcher and researched co-construct the data—data are a product of the research process,

not simply observed objects of it. Researchers are part of the research situation, and their positions, privileges, perspectives, and interactions affect it (Charmaz, 2000, 2006; Clarke & Clarke, 2005, Clarke, 2006). This study will be using Charmaz's (2000) key concepts with regards CGT.

A GT approach is not without its critics though, with Goldthorpe (2000) criticism of GT focuses on two elements (Mjoset, 2005). First, since the programme of grounded theory allows successive modifications of the hypotheses formulated at the start of the process of empirical research, Goldthorpe, in line with the extend only rule attacks the "extreme inductivism" (2000, p.77) and the "adhockery" of grounded theory (2000, p.89). Secondly, Goldthorpe (2000) argues that grounded theory does not rely on indicators. Instead (as in Blumer's (1969) formulation about testing concepts, researchers engage in what Goldthorpe regards as "no more than conceptualization" (2000, p.60), disguised as "sensitivity to context". Goldthorpe (2000) claims that this makes convergent conceptualization impossible. Thomas and James (2006, p.791) have expressed their concerns with the way GT has a "*procedural machinery*" approach to data analysis.

It is important that a researcher is aware and has read around criticism of their chosen theoretical approach (Silverman, 2013). Accepting and acknowledging criticism can be beneficial to completing research, especially when completing an exhaustive piece of qualitative research that can have many alternative research strategies to argue for and against. Whilst accepting that GT is not without its potential weaknesses, the researcher felt, for the many reasons listed above that this method was the most suitable design for this study. The combination of Grounded

Theory for data analysis and Action Research for data collection is used in studies that are interested in practical and collaborative conclusions (Teram, Schachter & Stalker, 2005; Poonamallee, 2009).

3.5 Study One Method- Semi Structured Interviews

The aim of the research for study one was to explore the views of industry insiders on how they use M & E to evidence a social impact (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). An initial consideration was given to conducting research through focus groups, especially for the pilot stage. These were deemed inappropriate, as charities would not feel comfortable discussing their M & E policies with each other (Barbour, 2008). Practical issues, such as geographical barriers and availability of participants also meant that the use of focus groups were inappropriate for study one. Sparkes, Smith and Caddick (2014), Smith (2010) and Gratton and Jones (2010) all highlight the benefits of the use of semi structured interviews for in-depth qualitative research. Semi structured interviews were selected for their ability to produce a rich source of data, that allows the researcher to guide the interview without imposing on the interviewee's answers (Smith & Caddick, 2012).

Coakley and White (1992) warn that it is not easy to use interview data as a basis for making conclusions. Such data cannot be used to generate statistics that can be compared and analysed apart from the lives of those being studied. Data can be used to provide information beyond the sometimes superficial responses elicited by survey questionnaires sent to a large sample of respondents. The challenge in analysing interview data is in identifying patterns in the responses of different

individuals and highlighting important content in a wide range of information given by each respondent (Coakley and White, p.23, 1992). Johnson, Burrows and Williams (2004) acknowledge that qualitative research has potential downfalls. These include a greater difficulty analysing data, researcher bias influencing the data and the findings may only be unique to the small sample size interviewed (Johnson et al, 2004). Whilst identifying that semi structured interviews can have flaws, it was decided that the research would benefit from the rich and clear data that semi structured interviews would produce.

Sparkes and Smith's (2013) interview guide helped shape the initial pilot questions for interview. Fourteen questions, formulated around four key themes were detailed and analysed for content and quality of provoking a response. An informal pilot interview to assess the questions and their wording was conducted with a fellow university researcher. Following this discussion and further analysis the questions were finalised (Appendix Four), leaving nine questions focusing on four themes (bulleted below) and one final question asking for additional comments that may have been missed from the research, inviting the participant to fill in any gaps (Sparkes & Smith, 2013).

- Evidencing a social impact through the collection of M & E
- Problems faced when capturing M & E
- Future improvements for M& E collection
- Meeting funders M & E requirements

Open-ended questions were used to encourage active participation. A mixture of elaboration and clarification probes were used to add knowledge and for the

researcher to achieve greater knowledge (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). As with all semi-structured interviews, the researcher could be flexible and go “off topic” if deemed appropriate during the interview. Whilst the four main topics listed above were covered, the interviews were supported by the replies from the participants. Potential candidates for interview were selected by meeting the following characteristics:

- Had previously demonstrated a use of M & E on projects through impact reports on their website or through social media channels.
- Work in the third sector or not for profit organisations.
- Evidence of the use of “Sport for Good” and use of sport to re-engage adolescents or “at risk” youths.

The rationale of a stratified purposeful sampling is to select information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the question under study (Bach-Nielsen, et al. 2005). A purposive approach is well suited to small-scale and in-depth studies (Ritchie et al., 2003). Purposeful sampling was specifically employed to help ensure that those interviewed were information-rich cases that would yield insightful data relevant to understanding the phenomena under investigation (Creswell et al, 2007).

The researcher, via desktop research, selected an initial list of potential candidates for the study. The target list consisted of nine charities, spread nationwide who all fitted the purposeful sampling criteria. An introductory email, introducing myself as the lead researcher, detailing the studies aims and methods, was distributed. At this point elements of frustration crept into the study. It was a complicated procedure gaining access to the correct person to speak to who represented the selected charities. Of the nine initial targets, five responded within a fortnight showing a genuine interest in the research and expressing a willingness to participate. Two

charities replied to say that they would not wish to take part in the study at this time. The remaining two charities, despite being contacted by the lead researcher by email and over the telephone, did not reply so were removed from study one.

One charity volunteered for an initial telephone interview to discuss the research further. Whilst not a formal pilot interview, this telephone exchange played an important part in establishing that the research questions were suitable and could prompt some rich discussion. This phone interview, whilst not recorded, was logged by the researcher's field notes. The notes were used to analyse questions and make any amendments to the initial pilot questions, a method advised by McEwan et al (2019).

The researcher and the host charities agreed five initial dates, with the researcher agreeing to visit the host charity at their locations. One interview was arranged in the Midlands, one in the North West and three interviews were agreed for the same day in the South. All of the charities were sent a follow up email to thank for them for agreeing to participate in the study and I would contact them again prior to the interview.

3.5 The Use of Pilot Interviews

Pilot interviews were conducted internally and externally before the first interview was conducted. The purpose of the pilot studies was to refine the data collection methods and develop relevant lines of questioning for interviews (Yin, 2009) and to assess the questions for clarity, poise and response rate. Pilot studies help to

determine the quality of potential responses and improve conceptual and syntax clarity (Van Teijlingen, & Hundley, 2001). The pilot studies were also an essential experience for myself, a relatively novice researcher, to sharpen my interview skills, and to use the pilot interviews to reflect and assess my own performance (Sampson, 2004).

The first pilot was conducted internally with a senior member of staff from the University's Sport Development programme. The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The participant answered the questions reflecting on their work as a sport development officer and was able to answer all of the questions clearly and offer input. When the interview was finished, I immediately asked for feedback on my interview style, technique, and the wording of questions from the participant. The audio tape was then sent to one of my supervisors who also offered feedback and offered suggestions, particularly on when to use silence to let the participants reflect before answering. My supervisor also highlighted the importance of allowing the participant to finish the interview with a closing remark, granting them the opportunity to discuss a theme or topic that the research questions may have omitted (Hammer & Wildavsky, 2018).

Whilst the questions needed some minor adjustments (as the participant did not work in the third sector, and some questions focused on that), the pilot interview was a vital part of the process. The participant, a vastly experienced sport development officer, was able to understand all of the questions and the content and talk freely and at ease in my presence. Critically I also realised the importance of placing my recording software in an appropriate position to record someone who may be softly

spoken and to improve my focus when interviewing. I noticed that I was so focused on what would be a strong follow up question that I lost some rapport with the participant. Using my crib sheet and interview guide, I also realised the importance of a successful “ticking” system, so I could easily identify which questions I had covered or not. Something as innocuous as how to mark a question as completed or not can easily make a researcher lose focus (Adams, 2010). The feedback was vital for the next pilot interview.

The second pilot interview was with a managing director for a County Sports Provider (CSP) who had an extensive knowledge and experience of working in the not for profit sector. This participant had been recommended to the due to the person’s expertise and industry experience. The interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interview again evidenced that the questions were stimulating conversation and providing rich data. The interviewee was a skilled raconteur, who was very comfortable sharing their views on M & E in the third sector. Due to my extensive reading of literature on the topic of M & E and the third sector there were times during the interview where I felt that the participant was almost asking me to back up and clarify their views.

Whilst I am aware that by being an interviewer, I would have some effect on a participant I wanted a truthful reflection on their views and experience on M & E, not answers that they may feel would placate my knowledge on the subject. Roulston, De Marrias and Lewis (2003) state that to avoid having biased data, the researcher should maintain his own knowledge and let the interviewee ‘flow’. The pilot interview was a vital process for making me realise that my participants views were what truly

matters for my study, and that any literature or knowledge that I had gained was to be used to guide the interview structure, not to be used to come across as an “expert in the field”. This pilot interview made me investigate further my “position” as the researcher and what influence I will naturally have. Analysing my field notes I soon realised that pre-interview the participant and myself spent ten minutes informally discussing M & E before the interview was recorded. I now realise this was a mistake, as even though we were only making initial conversation, I may have inadvertently influenced the interview by having this pre-interview discussion (Wiederhold, 2015). At this point, I decided that for any further interviews all talk M & E would be saved for the recordings only and any initial conversations would not see me discuss M & E at all.

Additional self-reflective notes were made after both pilot interviews (Drisko, 1997). Notes on techniques for improvement (speed of questioning, allowing the participant the chance to reflect and pause before replying and welcoming silences) were also made after listening back to the tapes (Louw, Watson & Jimarkon, 2011). Whilst no two interviews are the same, Oltmann (2016) suggests that by listening back to audio tapes a researcher can improve their style and interviewing technique. It was only upon listening to the pilot interviews that I realised I was agreeing or saying yes to a lot of comments made. Again, this can be misleading for an interview or may sway a participant to continue discussing what they feel are the “correct” answers, so I made a note to eradicate any replies that may be misleading whilst still displaying that I was an intent listener. After successfully completing and evaluating the pilot interviews, the main interviews were conducted and the data was digitally stored ready for analysis (see 4.2 Interviews for Study One).

3.6 Study One Positionality

Study one consisted of a nationwide set of interviews with industry practitioners who had experience of M & E. Using the insider/outsider continuum devised by Anderson & Herr (2015), I considered myself to be an “outsider” studying insiders. I had no experience working as a “middle manager”, or experience working in an office environment and compiling impact reports (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992). My previous role working as a Sport Development Officer at a College meant I had some experience completing funding bids, but the funding I acquired was “additional funds”, i.e. for a new football kit or set of netballs etc. The funding was not essential for me to keep my job role, as was the case, at the most extreme, for the people I interview (Neville, 2010). I had no “real” similarities or shared experiences with the cohort that I interviewed (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). My knowledge on M & E and Impact had all been acquired through literature, and why I feel I was well versed enough to converse and engage with the participants during the semi structured interviews (Galetta, 2013), I certainly was not entering the interview as “the expert in the room” (Van Audenhove, 2007).

I wanted to understand how, why, and what it was like to complete M & E and evidence a social impact, and how they attempted to complete these tasks in their designated roles (Harlock, 2013). I also wanted the interviewee’s to share their knowledge and to describe any issues or problems that they (or the sector) may encounter (Walker & Hayton, 2017). I wanted to enter the research field as a relative “novice”, to learn from the industry experts and to analyse the findings (Opdenakker, 2006).

With regards positionality, I had to consider how I entered the research field and how I conducted myself pre-interview, in regards contacting and then greeting the participants (Rabionet, 2011). I had an interesting moment, where I had to reflect and consider on my positionality, during the first interview (Mears, 2012). The quote below, taken from my reflective field notes, was said to me in the introductory talk with a participant before I had even pressed the record button on my Dictaphone:

> *Well you know that M & E can be very difficult, especially capturing some of the great work that sport can do in the local area with a range of nationalities, but you will already know that as you are the expert* (Researcher's Field Note)

"You are the expert"…The words really made me analyse my position. I certainly did not feel like an expert and did not attempt to portray myself as one. Whilst having some pre-determined knowledge on M & E and the local area was essential to guide the interview, I decided to carefully consider and review how I would approach the next set of interviews. I needed to ensure that the participants were aware that I was non-judgemental and that the interviews were an opportunity for them to inform knowledge on a topic area, not to simply justify or add rigour to what I already knew (Silverman, 2016).

Approaching the interviews as an "outsider" had certain limitations (Rubin, 2012). Hellawell (2006, p.485) defines outsider researcher as when the "researcher is not familiar with the setting and people s/he is researching". I did not have an exhaustive list of contacts that an "insider" may possess (Herr & Anderson, 2014). I had to gain trust and show credibility through my conduct pre and post interview. My outsider status impacted my inability to network with clientele who met the requirements to add knowledge to the study (Shenton & Hayter, 2004). Desktop research was utilised to

compile a list of suitable interview targets, who were all contacted via email, with a follow up email to confirm the interview. All of the interviews were conducted at the offices of the participants, resulting in them feeling comfortable and relaxed in their environment (Conti & O'Neill, 2007).

The benefits of being an "outsider" though meant that I did not enter the field with pre-conceived ideas of conducting M & E, or any experience of how difficult evidencing impact can be (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). I positioned myself as a researcher who was looking to gain insight into a world that is not natural to them (Knott, 2009). However, as I experienced in the field note above, the title "PhD student" can offer an illusion of expertise, especially to practitioners who are unsure on academia.

Reflection was needed on how my outsider positionality affected the quality of responses through the interviewer stage (Ganga & Scott, 2006). Despite all participants being assured anonymity, it certainly "felt" in some of the interviews that the practitioners were being very guarded with their answers. Some of the replies, especially to the more probing questions, were very limited or short in context. Perhaps, as Knapik's (2006) research identifies, this is normal in certain qualitative interviews, not all participants disclose information. Alternatively, could it be that my positionality, or job title as a PhD student, meant I was viewed in a "threatening manner" by certain participants. I certainly felt warmly welcomed, and the interviews flowed better, by the practitioners who openly discussed they had previously worked with or collaborated with universities in the past. Upon reflection, perhaps I should have stated clearer that my questions never meant to judge the quality or quantity of M & E produced by an organisation or an individual.

3.7 Interviews for Study One

Participants were contacted for an interview vie email and were interviewed at their workplace at a time and date convenient for themselves. Participants signed a consent form in advance of the interview and advised that they could withdraw from the study at any moment. It was important to stress that total anonymity was granted for the study, to allow participants the chance to speak candidly about their experiences with M & E. The work of Lancaster (2016), Wiles *et al.* (2008) and Novak (2014) offered the researcher a greater understanding of how important anonymity is for producing rich qualitative data.

It was vital to ensure that high levels of trust developed between the participants and the researcher; therefore, one of the challenges of this study was to preserve the anonymity of the participants throughout the study. Consequently, pseudonyms have been used and no data is presented that can geographically locate the interviewee (Morgan & Bush, 2016).

At the onset of each interview, standardised introductory comments were provided about the purpose of the study, the use of data, and issues regarding confidentiality and anonymity as advised by Corti, Day and Backhouse (2000). All of the interviews started with questions aimed to make the interviewee feel completely at ease. Generic questions such as the participants work background or industry experience, whilst still linked to the study somewhat, were used as a format for the participants to relax and feel at ease with the interview process (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The questions, excluding those of an introductory or classificatory nature, were as '*open ended, neutral, sensitive, and clear'* as possible (Patton, 1987). Interviews are a method that

allow researchers to explore the `how' and `why' of the phenomenon under investigation (Gratton & Jones, 2004).

As advised by (Rabionet, 2011) all of the semi structured interviews were audio recorded. Self-reflective notes were also used by the interviewer, to help reflect and improve each interview and to help keep an up to date research journal (Ortlipp, 2008). The interviews were semi-structured in nature to ensure certain topics would be covered, whilst also allowing the interviewee more freedom in how they respond (Pole and Lampard, 2002; Bryman, 2004). Harvey-Jordan and Long (2001, p .15) discuss how semi-structured interviews allow: *'people to answer more on their own terms than the standardised interview permits, but still provide a greater structure for comparability over that of the focused interview'*. Semi-structured interviews also allowed the researcher freedom to ask new questions during the interview if topics emerged that had not been covered by the interview schedule, as advised by Mays and Pope (2000).

Harrell and Bradley (2009) state that semi structured interviews can allow the interviewee to almost decided the pace and content of the interview. Questions were used as triggers and the subsequent answers then "guided" the interview. A set of twelve questions featured in all of the interviews. However due to the nature of semi structured interviews the interview was not fixed and could react accordingly to themes or answers from the participant that may require some probing. The interviews always ended with the opportunity for the participants to add any information or final remarks. This allowed the participants to add "closure" to the interview (Doody & Noonan, 2013) and add additional context if they felt necessary.

Interviews were conducted utilising ‘active interviewing’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) with interviewees encouraged to deviate from the interview schedule in order to speak about subject areas and issues of importance. Seidman (1998, p.47) proposes that interviewers should; ‘listen more, talk less’. Having a copy of the interview guide meant I could mark off topics as they were discussed, a technique listed by Nelson (2010) as essential for a successful semi structured interview. The benefits of the face-to-face interview as opposed to a phone conversation or electronic questionnaire were that I was able to form a rapport and elicit answers through the relationship formed. Smith, Sparkes and Caddick (2014, p.28) highlight that a positive attached to completing semi structured interviews, “participants can attach much more about the meanings they attach to their experiences…providing the interviewer with deeper knowledge about them than could be gleamed from a structured interview”.

Five interviews were conducted nationwide with industry insiders who all worked with and analysed M & E data as part of their job roles.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

A detailed ethics approval report was submitted to the University of Wolverhampton’s ethics committee and approved before the research was conducted (Appendix Five). Bryman (2004) states that all social researchers will encounter ethical issues at some point of the research process. All of the interviews took place with consenting adults, who were discussing their experiences from a professional viewpoint, with no aim to cause any form of distress. There was a very low emotional risk attached to the study, as the participants were sharing their work-based experiences. All of the interviews

took place at the work location of the interviewee's, further eliminating any potential risk. No incentives were offered for participants in the study. The researcher showed no bias to any particular set of opinions that originated from the interviews.

Participants in the study were asked to complete a consent form prior to being interviewed (Appendix Six) and were informed that they were free to leave the interview or withdraw from the study at any point. Risk, whilst on a minor scale, could be present if a particular interviewee condemns a past or present sport development project or past employer's M & E policies. The participants were assured of complete anonymity in order to speak confidently and reveal honest answers. McNamee, Olivier and Wainwright (2007) stress that anonymity is key in solidifying the relationship between researcher and participant in the qualitative research process.

All interviews were transcribed verbatim within forty-eight hours of the interview with pseudonyms used in any answers that may have disclosed information. All interviews were stored on a password-protected computer, with the original recordings being deleted when they had been transferred and safely stored. A copy of all recordings, for safekeeping, was transferred onto an external storage drive that was password protected and locked away. The researcher transcribed interviews with pseudonyms inserted and then anonymised versions were available to my supervisors for feedback.

All participants were thanked for their time at the end of the interview and sent an email a week later to thank them for their time.

3.9 Data Analysis for Study One

The focus of this research was to investigate how charities who engaged with young people (aged 16-29) through the “hook” of sport (Chamberlain, 2013), collect and use M & E data to evidence their social impact. This grounded theory analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), drawn down via semi-structured interviews with third sector industry insiders, will discuss and scrutinise themes that have emerged from the data regarding M & E collection in the third sector. It will add to the knowledge base on M & E, highlighting practical implications and emerging concepts for the third sector to consider.

The participants in the study had a combined experience of over sixty years in this sector. Their job roles, whilst not exclusively the same, were similar in that they worked in the Sport for Good sector and had a working day to day relationship with conducting and analysing M & E. All of the participants were primarily office based and their experiences of working with M & E involved, but were not limited to, interactions with SMT, coaches, external funders, participants, colleagues, fellow charities and the commercial/corporate sectors. They were encouraged through probing questions to discuss both the positive and negative aspects of M & E.

Glaser and Holton (2007) identify that it can be intimidating for a relatively novice researcher when presented with a mass of transcribed data that needs careful analysis and representation. Holliday (2007, p.22) agrees that, “As many novice and experienced researchers find out once they have got their data, deciding what to do with it and how to talk about it on paper can become equally crucial and even more problematic”. The initial analysis task was to read and then re-read the transcripts several times, devouring the data and becoming immersed. Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) suggest that this method of data immersion will ensure the researcher

ingrains fully in their data. Transcribing the data verbatim also ensured complete data familiarisation occurred (Halai, 2007).

As advised by Thomas (2006) I started to read, re-read and open code the data, using a computer software package (Nvivo) to assist. Emerging themes were identified and labelled, and in some instances, both positive and negative categories would be attached to a theme, i.e. Data Collection by Sport Coaches. Data reduction or simplification was not the main analytical purpose of my qualitative coding (Gibbs, 2008). Saldana (2015) details that coding is a way of providing a researcher the opportunity to interact and think about the data collected. Work by Strauss (1987) recommended that coding is much more than simply giving categories to data: it is also about conceptualizing the data, raising questions, providing provisional relationships among and within the data, and discovering the data. Coding is to open up the inquiry and move towards interpretation (Mihas, 2019). Initial coding allowed the chance to develop themes, patterns and actions and a means of organising data sets (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The work of Thornberg and Charmaz (2014) is used to guide the data analysis using grounded theory.

Essential elements include the coding and categorization of data, concurrent data collection and analysis, the writing of memos, theoretical sampling, constant comparative analysis using inductive and abductive logic, the application of theoretical sensitivity, the development of intermediate coding practices and routines, the selection of core categories from the data, and the application of theoretical saturation (Rosenbaum, Moore & Steane, 2016).

Watt (2007) advises qualitative researchers to be careful not to display researcher bias and only identify themes in the data that were naturally forthcoming, not only selecting

data that provides the ‘correct answers’. Holliday (2007) warns that where a researcher has designed the interview questions and drives the research from beginning to end, the ‘reporting’ can be a culmination of the responses to each questions as ‘results’. This inhibits the emergence of independent realities that may be counter to or hidden by the dominant preoccupations of the researcher (Holliday, 2016). As the semi-structured interview was guided by findings from the literature review, there were bound to be some emerging themes from the data that had crossovers or similarities. Following the structure set by Watt (2007), any researcher bias, conscious or unconsciously, was diminished, allowing a realistic and data driven set of themes to emerge.

These themes, generated through the process of interviewing, were a basis for ‘making comparisons and contrasts between the different respondents’ (Gomm 2008, p. 244) and the views and experiences they recalled in relation to their involvement with M & E. The key themes that were the most ‘persistent features’ (Gomm 2008, p. 250) of the participants’ responses and that are most pertinent to the particular focus of this article, included:

- Evidencing a Social Impact (How, Who to and Why?)
- Expectancy versus the Reality of Collecting M & E
- Social Return on Investment (SROI)/Financial Impact
- Funders Demands and Requirements for M & E

The thesis will now explore the methods used for study two, starting with an introduction to action research.

3.10 Study Two Method-Action Research

Kurt Lewin is widely recognised as the founding father of Action Research, a label he coined in 1944. Action research gives credence to the development of powers of reflective thought, discussion, decision and action by ordinary people participating in collective research on "private troubles" (Wright Mills, 1959) that they have in common. That was how Kurt Lewin (1890-1947), whose first ideas on what he called 'action research' were set out in about 1934 (Marrow, 1977), came to describe its characteristics after a series of practical experiences in the early 1940s. *"No action without research; no research without action*", Lewin concluded.

Action research for Lewin was exemplified by the discussion of problems followed by group decisions on how to proceed. Action research, according to Lewin, must include the active participation by those who have to carry out the work in the exploration of problems that they identify and anticipate (Adelman, 1993). To Lewin, action research allowed him the opportunity to solve practical problems and to discover general laws of group life (Peters & Robinson, 1984). Lewin believed that experimentation was an important part of any change effort. Action research was built upon the traditional scientific paradigm of experimental manipulation and observation of effects (Clark, 1976). A change is made, and the results are studied in order to inform future change efforts. Similar to traditional science, action research yields a set of general laws expressed in ‘if/so’ propositions (Peters and Robinson, 1984).

Most commonly employed in organisational and educational fields, Berg (2004) describes action research as a collaborative approach to research that involves strategic action and critical reflection and provides participants with the means to make

improvements in practice based on individual and organizational needs. It involves researchers immersed within a systematic and cyclic process of planning; implementing, monitoring, reflecting and evaluating to facilitate better practice by encouraging reflection on practice (Tinning, 1992). Action research is associated with changing practice in the workplace through the active engagement of those practitioners who reside within it (Gilbourne, 1999, 2001). Elliott (1978) defined action research as a process that leads to improvement in the quality of action, while Dickson and Green (2001) perceived action research to lead to the ‘‘empowerment’’ of others.

Action research refers to the conjunction of three elements: action, research, and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process may be useful but it is not action research. Put another way, action research is a research strategy that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social analysis and democratic social change. The social change we refer to is not just any kind of change. Action research aims to increase the ability of the involved community or organisation members to control their own destinies more effectively and to keep improving their capacity to do so within a more sustainable and just environment (Greenwood & Levin, 2007).

McNiff & Whitehead (2011) stress that action research is about two things: action (what you do) and research (how you learn about and explain what you do). The action aspect of action research is about improving practice. The research aspect is about creating knowledge about practice. Coughlan and Brannick (2003) state that action research is suitable when the research question relates to describing an unfolding series of actions over time in an organisation; understanding how and why a change

can improve working practice within a group; and understanding how the process of change or improvement in order to learn from it. The aim of action research is to deepen practitioners' understanding of the complex situations in which they live and work, so that their actions are better informed. Rather than specific 'findings' or 'outcomes', action research generates what Elliott (1991, pp. 52-53) calls *'practical wisdom'* and Dreyfus (1982) and Elliott (1993, pp. 66-70) call *'situational understanding'*. Gummeson's (2000) work, presented below in table two, presents the tem major characteristics of AR, that this study will use as a reference point.

Table Two: Summary of Gummeson's (2000) ten major characteristics of Action Research:

1. Action researchers take action	Action researchers do not merely observe something happening; they are actively working to make it happen.
2. AR should always involve two goals	AR should solve a strategic goal, or help work towards the overall aim, and contribute scientific knowledge.
3. AR is interactive	AR requires full co-operation between the researcher and the research group, especially as AR can be unpredictable with many unexpected events.
4. AR aims at developing holistic understanding	AR researchers need to be able to move between technical phases and different working groups within an organisation.
5. AR is fundamentally about change	AR is applicable to the understanding, knowledge and planning and implementing change within an organisation.
6. AR requires an understanding of the ethical framework.	AR researchers need to ensure that an ethical agreement is in place and is maintained throughout the research period.
7. AR can include all types of data collection methods	Data collection can include both qualitative and quantitative methods. The planning and use of data collection tools must be presented and accepted by the research group.
8. AR requires a breadth of pre-understanding	A skilled AR researcher will have some understanding of the research climate they are about to enter. This does not rule out a Grounded Theory approach; however it is advantageous to have an initial knowledge set on the area that will be researched.
9. AR should be conducted in real time	AR should be a "live" study that is written and reflected on as it is conducted.
10. The AR paradigm requires its own quality criteria	AR should not be judged by the criteria of positivist science.

Table Two: Summary of Gummeson's (2000) ten major characteristics of Action Research

3.10.1 Why is AR suitable for this study?

This study suited an Action Research approach due to the collaborative and mutual approach to problem solving (McNiff, 2016) that was necessary in order for the charity to identify:

- How they can improve their M & E data collection
- How they could greater evidence their social impact
- How members of the SMT can understand and greater manage the onus on deliverers to collect the "raw" M & E data
- How can there be a greater synergy between the deliverers (tracksuits) and non-deliverers (suits)

The action research approach offered the opportunity for the experiences and practical knowledge of the charity staff to unite with the researcher's unbiased and critical viewpoint and research skill-set. An ethnographic approach, where the researcher is situated "inside" the charity but research independently and without any internal collaboration was considered initially, but after further academic reading and consultations with the charity SMT, it was finalised that action research would be the definitive choice. The researcher was reliant on the practical experiences of the charity staff to initially guide and shape the research, and to explain and evidence how a charity works on a day-to-day basis. As the research evolved, the researcher became more experienced with the work structure and was more confident analysing and reviewing the working practices under the spotlight.

3.10.2 Dealing with the "Messiness" of Action Research

Davis (2007) underlined the key characteristic of action research, supported by the work of others (Kemmis, 2001; Wadsworth, 2006) as the image of a spiral consisting of continuous and overlapping cycles of self-reflection (planning, acting, observing, reflecting and critical analysis). Davis (2007) described it as an ongoing process that represented a flow of interrelated events over time. Although, reflection on action then appears to lead to new action resulting in a flow of events, Davis (2007) points out that the process may become messy and original plans may change, but that this merely contributes to the learning experience.

> *In action research, standardisation defeats the purpose. The virtue of action research is its responsiveness. It is what allows you to turn unpromising beginnings into effective endings. It is what allows you to improve both action and research outcomes through a process of iteration. As in many numerical procedures, repeated cycles allow you to converge on an appropriate conclusion.* (Dick, 1993, p.82)

Brydon Miller, Maguire and Greenwood (2003, p.44) stress that it "*helps to be able to handle a certain degree of chaos, uncertainty and messiness*". Ackoff's (1999) term 'messes' sums up one of the ways many action researchers differ from their conventional social science colleagues. Messes are complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved (Brydon Miller *et al*, 2003).

Action research can be a complicated and unforgiving environment to research in (Greenwood, 2007). Similar studies to this have reported instances where an action research approach has been a complex issue to manage, with Parnell (2014, p.122) in particular facing difficulties due to “senior management not fully co-operating with the Action Research process in its entirety”, and expecting all of the work to be produced by the researcher as opposed to a collaborative effort. Richardson, Gilbourne and Littlewoods (2004) action research article, that focused on work with the heads of education for Premier League academies, discusses the frustrations Richardson faced when attempting to engage practitioners who had reported a lack of time to be able to commit to an AR change:

> *The process of action research offered John a glimpse of what he could achieve (i. e., the group sessions) yet his environmental and personal circumstances (i.e., Academy structure, staff relations, aspirations and expectations of the role) ensured that change was difficult, if not unlikely. Although it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions from these observations it seems reasonable to reflect on the potential of action research to both excite and frustrate practitioners in equal measure*. (Richardson, p.257. 2003)

Similarly, Tomlinson (2011, p.58) Action Research thesis discusses how “The reality of the research reflected the unpredictable process and dilemmas that may occur within the processes of action research and practice-change.” Tomlinson (2011) completed an AR study attempting to improve the psychological well-being care available for professional academy football players. The cautious words of the experiences that Tomlinson (2011), Parnell (2014), Richardson *et al.* (2004) and

Richardson (2003) faced when attempting to implement and research Action Research changes in a professional and fast paced environment have been noted for this study as a reminder of the difficulties one can encounter when completing AR.

Kemmis (2006, p.52) believes the quality of practitioner research must have a critical dimension:

> *It must explore issues both inside and beyond the practice, and be participative in nature. With the critical dimension comes the need for action researchers and practitioner researchers to be willing to tell unwelcome truths.*

Kemmis (2006) insists that a vital part of being an Action Researcher is raising concerns and discussing issues deemed as controversial, or unpopular for people to hear. Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon (2013) discuss further the concept of critical participatory action research, identifying the need to remain critical throughout the research process.

3.10.3 Assessing Quality in Action Research

One important aspect of the action research process is that it shows scientific rigour. Coghlan and Brannick (2002) suggest that rigour in action research refers to 'how data are generated, gathered, explored and evaluated, how events are questioned and interpreted through multiple action research cycles' (p. 23). For rigour to be shown, the following processes need to be evident: How the researcher engages in the multiple and repetitious action research cycles and how these were recorded to reflect a true representation of what was studied. How the researcher challenged and tested their assumptions and interpretations of what was happening continuously through the

project. By means of content, process and premise reflection, so that their familiarity with and closeness to the issues are exposed to critique. How the researcher accessed different views of what was happening which produced confirming and contradictory interpretations. How the interpretations and diagnoses are grounded in scholarly theory, rigorously applied, and how project outcomes are challenged, supported or disconfirmed in terms of the theories underpinning those interpretations and diagnoses (Coghlan and Brannick, 2002).

Reason and Bradbury (2001) identify what they consider suitable questions to assess the quality and impact of an AR study: Does the AR demonstrate a praxis of relational participation? How well does the AR reflect the working relationship between the action researcher and members of the organisation? Is AR guided by a reflexive concern for practical outcomes? Is the action project directed by constant reflection as part of the organisational change or improvement? Does the AR study evidence a methodological suitability? Does the AR study engage in significant work? Does the AR project demonstrate that a sustainable change has come out of the project? (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

The methods for assessing quality within AR will be revisited for the analysis and results section of the thesis.

Table Three: Anderson and Herr's Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria (2005)

The table below is a summary from Anderson and Herr's (2005) work that focuses on the validity criteria applied to assess the impact of an Action Research project. This criteria will be used as a guide, additional to the work from Reason & Bradbury (2001), to help shape the AR and to be reflected upon throughout the AR process.

Goals of Action Research	Quality/Validity Criteria
The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
The achievement of action-orientated outcomes	Outcome validity
The education of both the researcher and the participants	Catalytic validity
Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

Table Three: Anderson and Herr's Goals of Action Research Validity (2005)

3.11 Action Research at Sport 4 Life

Action research involves utilising a systematic cyclical method of planning, taking action, observing, evaluating (including self-evaluation) and critical re-flection prior to planning the next cycle (Elliott, 1980; Kemmis, 1993). One must be informed by the other to affect change. Each cycle should increase the researcher's knowledge of the original question and, hopefully, lead to a solution or change in knowledge. Some stages of the action research cycle may overlap and the researcher must reflect throughout these cycles (Taylor, Wilkie & Baser, 2006).

Lewin's Model of Action Research (See Figure One below) guided the Action Research. It was important that researcher had a detailed strategy on how to approach

an action research study. Whilst there are multiple other forms of proposed AR cycles (List, 2006), it was decided that Lewin's (Cited in Dickens & Watkins, 1999) model would work best with the planned research timeline at the charity.

The Action Research at S4L consisted of three 'cycles'. These cycles lasted approximately three months each. The cycles are categorised with the working titles: Explore/Integrate (Cycle One), Act/Decide Change (Cycle Two) and Review/Exit (Cycle Three)

The specific intentions of each cycle are discussed in detal in Chapters 5, 6 & 7 but the overall aim was to produce informative data that investigates the topics disscussed in study one, whilst also improving the internal M & E processess at S4L. The Action Research intended to have a 'natural flow', with no members of S4L staff aware on when a cycle started or ended. The Action Research would be collaborative across the S4L strategic and delivery teams, and would be supplemented by a research journal, in addition to interviews and observations.

Figure One: Lewin's Model of Action Research (Cited by Dickens & Watkins, 1999)

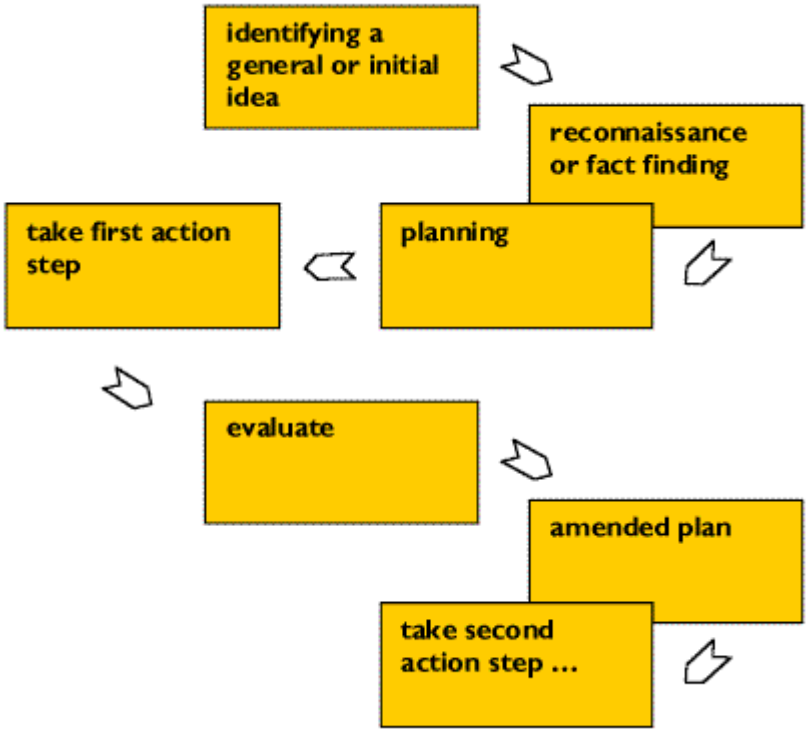


Figure One: Lewin's Model of Action Research

Lewin's model of Action Research, presented above from the work of Dickens and Watkins (1999) was the method used for this research. The AR process was not straightforward, and the boxes listed above did not always neatly coincide when in the reality of the AR process. However, the method and the logical steps were adhered to during the research period at S4L.

3.12 Methodology Summary

The methodology chapter presented to the reader the key methodological concepts that were utilised throughout the study. The chapter discussed the qualitative

approach used and detailed the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher. The chapter concluded with a focus on the action research approach selected to gain an insight and achieve a greater understanding of the complexities that emerged in study one. Study one will now be presented and discussed below.

4 Study One

4.1 Introduction to Study One

Study One intended to capture, from industry professionals, the realities of M & E in the third sector in order to greater understand the first two research questions:

1. What perspectives are prevalent across third sector sports organisations with regards to their use and application of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques?

2. How can sport for good charities greater evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation?

Study One consisted of nationwide interviews, with participants selected due to their suitability to provide contextual data for the study (Morse, 2010). The study participants, whilst protecting anonymity, had the following characteristics:

- Claire, Impact Manager of a Northern based organisation that uses doorstep sport to work with young people in areas of high poverty.
- Alex, Head of Impact & Insights at a Midlands based sport for good charity.
- Ben, Head of M & E at a London based sport for good charity that specialises on creating educational links for ‘at risk’ students.
- David, Head of Operational Delivery for a Midlands based sports coaching company.

- Ella, Impact Manager for a London based organisation that works with third sector organisations to improve their impact.

This chapter will present the themes that emerged from the interviews identifying implications for study two.

4.2 Study One Results Section

The thematic analysis from the semi-structured interviews from study one are detailed below. The themes are presented in no particular order of preference. The participant's anonymised voices are presented in italics. Research from within the third sector is used throughout the results section as a comparison or to add authentication for the findings, consistent with the use of a GT approach (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

4.2.1 Evidencing a Social Impact (How, Who to and Why?)

Charities have vastly improved their methods for data collection (Arvidson, 2009). Nevertheless, an emerging theme from the interviews was the issues charities now face evidencing their impact. Charities appear to be struggling with the following three areas: How (do they evidence impact)? Who to? In addition, Why?

Some of the questions covered with the participants included; how do charities evidence impact? What platforms or collaborations should they seek to display their

impact? What are the best methods of showing that they our delivering their aims and objectives? Claire discusses how time consuming corresponding to funders can be:

> *We will often produce quite lengthy written reports that will go to satisfy a funder and we will also produce short infographics* (Claire)

Claire details how a written report will be presented to a funder but will have no external influence or impact on anyone but that funder. An almost identical report will be issued to several funders, but in different formats, similar to previous findings by Harlock (2013). The work from Harlock (2013) and Harlock & Metcalf (2016) further identifies the strain that charities operate under trying to manage copious funder reports.

The quote from Claire (below) questions what can charities learn or achieve from producing copious amounts of written reports for funders.

> *Written reports go to funders, we upload things onto our website, and we do summary infographics with key data, it gets promoted on our website and through newsletters. We will also look to try and speak at conferences to external people. Then within our network, we have a regional networking meetings, and again we will share that with people on the ground.* (Claire)

Claire identifies that evidencing an impact can be a difficult, time-consuming task (Harlock, 2014). When questioned, “How do you currently evidence your impact?” all of the participants discuss measurement tools and data collection packages such as Outcome Star and Views (Views is an online data collection method, suitable for storing registers and participant details), but fail to mention or lack clarity on how they display their evidence. Comparing the quotes between Alex & Ben below:

"So in terms of impact, well we record all the data with an online monitoring system powered by Substance and we collate all the information on there" (Alex)

"So we use different tools. So we have a CRM database, which is our outputs database. So we get our coaches that our working on the ground to enter registration information and engagement information of the young people on their programmes, into the database so we can kind of deal with the nuts and bolts of how many young people are attending our programmes. So that is the outputs data and that is driven by the coaches." (Ben)

The participants talk in terms of data collection and online monitoring systems but struggled to convey how they actually evidence their impact (Harlock & Metcalf, 2016). Charities appeared content to demonstrate impact as improving numbers or acquiring new participants, replicating findings from Dawson (2010) & Macmillan (2013). This category, it would appear is presenting more questions than answers. Whom are the charities highlighting impact to? Are charities trying to recruit financial backers (Macmillan, 2013), more participants or simply sharing success stories? The charities were all relaxed and comfortable explaining how they have collected baseline data and used online platforms for comparisons, but they all seemed unsure on how practically they evidence their impact to a wider audience, which could result in a rise in securing future funding (Harlock, 2013). It would appear they struggle to connect their evidence with the public, with (Ben) admitting that his charity currently *"evidence our impact insufficiently if I am completely honest".* Could it just be that as Kay (2009) highlights "hard facts', policy-oriented research traditionally privileges quantitative, positivist approaches over qualitative, social constructivist approaches. The enthusiastic embracing of evidence-based policy has accentuated this: at an

organizational level, the requirement for accountability encourages an emphasis on methods that can help 'measure'. As Kay (2009) identifies it is a lot easier in social research to "measure" something as opposed to "evidencing" something.

Garbarino and Holland (2009) acknowledge that the selection of monitoring techniques is constrained by the preference of some policy makers for 'hard' quantitative data, even when more qualitative methods would prove to be superior indicators of a programmes relative success or failure. Coalter (2006) stresses that policy makers see qualitative data as subjective, capable of selective presentation and of limited value to policy makers. Smedley (2015) acknowledges, *"Charities are very good at glossy leaflets that show the cause they're fighting for, but in terms of really getting to the nitty-gritty of telling people what impact that money is going to make, that comes a long, long way down."* Evidencing a social impact, aside from measurable job or training based outcomes is a struggle that the sport for good sector is encountering (Gibbon & Dey, 2011).

A 2011 NPC (Ogain *et al*, 2012) report identified more and more private donors and grant-making trusts only fund charities that can demonstrate their impact. In 2008, more than 70% of charities said that funders required evaluation reports, and 60% said they had placed a greater emphasis on outcomes in the past five years (Ogain *et al*, 2012). Research identified that charities that evidence their impact well, will receive greater funding (Harlock, 2013). However, Ogain *et al* (2012) reveal that TSOs already perceive barriers to impact measurement, including a lack of time, skills and funding. David discusses the topic of charities not sure on how to "present" data outwardly:

> *I am admitting our failures and our shortcomings about not making the most out of the data. But Sport England, until last year when they started to look more*

into impact and insight would have been in the same boat. It's quite new to us as a sector. (David)

David goes on to reveal more on how new the importance of evidencing an impact is to the sector:

Traditionally it has just been on participant numbers, regardless of quality or anything else. So I guess being busy we have just done what we have to do. It's only now and that's why I'm very general with the answers that it is an admission that we have not had the chance to and we have not been given the permission also almost to explore that further. We have covered that just with the case study part of it and building up those stories. Which is powerful but there is lots of those around. That in itself as a collection of a lot of words does not help the sector make its case outside of its own audience really. (David)

David talks candidly about the challenge the sector is facing with a shift from an 'outputs focused' approach to an 'outcomes approach' (Harlock, 2013). According to Harlock (2014) & Ellis (2009), charities still prefer collating quantitative data and historically, especially in a sporting context, funded on participation numbers (Coalter & Taylor, 2010). Impact measurement has become an increasingly important activity for third sector organisations in recent years, yet impact – and how to measure it – remain contested issues in policy, research and practice (Harlock, 2013).

Research by Hastings *et al*. (2015) found that more of the third sector have to 'chase' funding that is incongruent with their organisational objectives in order to survive. The non-profit sector has faced increased scrutiny during the economic downturn (Gleave *et al.,* 2010; Parnell *et al*., 2015). In the pursuit for more value for money and the growing need to assess programme impact, third sector organisations have felt an

urgency to provide evidence, in order to sustain and develop intervention delivery and evaluation (Pringle *et al.,* 2013). The charities that cope with this transformational change, that do not solely report on quantitative findings, will be better placed to provide evidence and secure sustainable funding methods (Bingham & Walters, 2012). The need for social impact measurement is growingly increasingly critical (Arvidson, 2009). Social organisations are clearly feeling more pressure to evidence their social value, as the funding and commissioning landscape evolves and grows more competitive (Clifford, Markey, & Malpani, 2013).

> *"We don't really know what works yet and we don't have that evidence yet. And there is not a way to really share that yet in the sector. What works in the sport for development sector is like so, so crucial so as a sector we need to demonstrate outstanding evidence"* (Ella)

David also discusses the need for evidencing a social impact, and starts to discuss how a long-term approach to evidencing a social impact can be lacking:

> *"The wider impact and because of the longitudinal nature of really understanding what the social impact is. I mean it's a big one isn't it?* (David)

Evidencing social impact is an under represented area. Charities are still overly reliant on anecdotal evidence and soundbites without rigorous evaluations to support the claims made (Metcalf, 2013). The participants all identify that evidencing a social impact is difficult. As David details (above) one of the problems charities face when evidencing a Social Impact can be the short-term nature of the funding, discussed previously by Bingham & Walters (2013). A true "Social Impact", such as urban re-generation, cutting long-term unemployment rates or boosting adolescents self-esteem through SBI's could take years to achieve (Spaaij, 2009). However, charities

are asked to record and display very short-term targets, with funders overly focused on short-term impact (Milbourne & Cushman, 2012).

Collins *et al*.(1999, cited in Collins 2014) were amongst the first commissioned to evaluate existing evidence on what might be achieved through sport, and they, like many other contemporary and subsequent analysts, noted that these political drivers might lead to research quantity but not necessarily quality. Collins *et al*. (2014, p.46) found that there were;

> *'a growing number of studies that describe short term outputs/throughputs in anecdotal/descriptive or even quantified forms', but observed that 'few of these looked at longer term outcomes, because of the difficulty of measuring these, or of having the data or resources over a long enough period to make a rigorous assessment' .*

The findings by Collins *et al*. (1999, cited in Collins 2014)) are now nearly two decades old but still align with the data in this study, with (Dave) discussing his frustration with "*short term measurements for short term funding*" and (Alex) stating *"that is the most frustrating part, when funding comes in you have to move things so quickly*".

The weaknesses identified by Collins (1999) included a lack of clarity in planning and specifying outcomes; lack of baseline data; short-termism, in projects and evaluations; conceptual difficulties in defining measures for outcomes; practical difficulties in operationalizing measures; and difficulty in deconstructing and attributing causality. They concluded that in most cases, 'evaluation is tentative, indicative and anecdotal, because insufficient (human and financial) resources are given to it, and insufficient intellectual attention in most cases is expended to identify outcomes and gather the necessary evidence to demonstrate them' (Collins, 2014, p.56). Collins findings have

strong similarities with data presented thus far in this study, highlighted by another confession from Dave:

> *"In terms of evidence I would hold my hands up and say it's more anecdotal… It's us making our own team decisions based on what we know and what we feel to see working on the ground".* (David)

These quotes support a comment made by Wicks (2017) who identifies that the sport for change sector is still relatively new and is learning how best to use M & E to evidence the social impact achieved. It is gaining momentum, but everyone is grappling with how to measure it and collate the evidence, in order to show the government that sport can play an important role in society (Wicks, 2017). Pawson (2006) and Coalter (2010) explain that it is necessary to develop monitoring and evaluation processes that are politically strategic and centrally concerned with asking contextualized questions about 'when, where, why, for whom and in what respects programmes work, as well as how, in what manner and at what cost they may be.

This section will close with another honest assessment by David, discussing the sector's lack of robust evidence to support the work it can achieve.

> *"We are doing ourselves a disservice by lots of the good that goes on and our inability collectively to access lots more funding to scale that up and do more. Because what we have got is not robust enough to evidence that".* (David)

The sport for good sector is still not quite sure on how best to evidence its impact, and will need further improvements and strategies in order to do so (Bingham & Walters, 2013; Coalter & Taylor, 2010). This will be an area of focus for the Action Research.

4.2.2 Expectancy versus the Reality of Collecting M & E

A prevalent and reoccurring theme arising from the interview data was the issues practitioners faced collecting raw M & E data. These issues seemed divided into two key categories: Coaches/deliverers who have no real desire to collect M & E data and participants who are unwilling to partake, or certainly hold a negative view of data collection. Positive words for M & E data collection were rare, with the consensus discussing M & E collection as time consuming, with little immediate reward for both coaches and participants, echoing the findings of Parnell *et al*., (2013). A key theme discovered through the data analysis is the conflict between delivery and non-delivery (i.e. admin/SMT) staff regarding M & E collection.

Analysing the viewpoint from the coach first (Ben) has noticed that:

> *"I think there is sort of a disaffected attitude towards evidencing. They call it like a performativity culture where everyone thinks they are under surveillance. There is that sort of approach where it feels a bit like big brother for some sort of coaches, and that can be the same for a lot of us. So there is a naivety of the power of evidence and driving impact from that sort of perspective".* (Ben)

Naivety, as Ben defines it, could be attributed to the fact that M & E is still relatively new to the sports charity sector (Arvidson, 2009). McGuire and Fenoglio (2004), identified that officers working in Football in the Community schemes often have little or no training in evaluation practice, and that a culture of evaluation was not apparent. The term "Big Brother" is an interesting phrase, with an open and transparent M & E collection viewed in a negative light by coaches, who begin to feel that their "impact" will be measured by the attendance rate at their sessions. Ben, as with all of the M &

E staff interviewed, were sharing their experiences of working first hand with coaches tasked with collecting “raw” M & E data. Another caveat to this study, and an important focus for study two, will be to spend time with the coaches tasked with collecting M & E, to understand the issues that they face (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014).

A negative theme that emerges from the data is the length of time needed for the coaches to collect M & E data:

> *“It’s seen as administration. That is a key term that is used again and again and again, oh yeah I have to do a lot of admin. This is taking away from my delivery time, my session time”.* (Ben)

M & E is viewed as a tiresome act that eradicates quality delivery time from a sport session (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014). The impact and use of M & E is not relayed to the practitioners who are often tasked with collecting the rawest form of M & E data in the toughest conditions (Coalter, 2007). A susceptibility to adapt to M & E is noted in a 2007 charity report by Bradshaw, p.6 (cited in Arvidson & Lyon, 2014):

> *“Staff are different here… they have to be treated with cotton gloves.....many of them think that ‘I have done like this for 15 years, there is no need to change!’ It is because of a feeling of ownership that they have initiated activities, and they don’t want to change on anyone else’s initiative’ this senior manager continued to explain that staff resist as a matter of principle: they do not want to be supervised.”*

Site locations for collecting M & E for the coaches may include urban settings, with a lot of sport outreach work conducted within the local communities, i.e. a late night basketball session or street cricket (Spaaij, 2009). These sessions are seldom delivered in new leisure centres with accessible classrooms to conduct M & E but gritty

and at times run down settings (Spaaij, 2009). Data collection can consist of registers, video diary's, interviews and formal one to one mentoring tools such as Outcome Star (Zappala & Lyons, 2009). M & E is identified in numerous articles as difficult to complete (Spaaij, 2009; Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014; Clayton *et al*., 2016), a point emphasised by Claire below:

> *"In certain environments, even counting heads, never mind things that are more focused on social outcomes, can be very challenging. But is has to be done or how will anyone know that things have become successful?"* (Claire)

All of the charities interviewed in this study traditionally focus their work on "hard to reach" youths who may have become disengaged with their local education or employment providers (Macdonald, 2013). Their understanding and use of the English language may be very limited, or in some areas, English may not be their first language or even their spoken language at all (Crisp, Roberts & Simmonds, 2011). Their ability to read, write or even understand the English language can be very limited and makes M & E collection very difficult. Also as noted by Alex, trust issues can be detrimental to data collection:

> "*We have found that young people in a community setting, especially if they are from a disadvantaged background, that they are a bit less trusting of authority figures. So they are not always going to be forthcoming with their details and all they want to do for the first couple of sessions is to get stuck into the programme and not get bogged down with any paperwork"* (Alex)

Coaches are described as having an adherence to M & E as they see no short term or long term benefits to their sessions (Harris & Adams, 2016). Coaches do not see the results of collecting data from young people on their programmes, and a coach

with a negative attitude towards M & E will only transpire this across to the participants (Harris, 2018). Ella, identifies that time can be an issue for collecting M & E.

> *"We have had comments in the past from people saying that doing the M & E actually takes longer than hosting the activity. Obviously that is not always true but that is a perception of that is out there".* (Ella)

As noted by Claire below, many coaches have also reported to their supervisors that they have little interest in collecting paperwork and collecting data. They work in sport because they enjoy the coaching and the social interaction of delivery, as opposed to collecting rigorous amount of paperwork (Harris, 2018). Sitting down with a young person on a computer to complete an Outcome Star assessment, or discussing a young person's self-efficacy can be a skill set that a traditional coach may not possess (Cronin, 2015). Traditional coaches, who can be categorised as "sport evangelists" do not see the need to "evidence the impact" sport can have on a young person's life (Kay, 2007).

> *"The biggest problem is getting people to do it, because culturally in sport it is difficult because a lot of coaches are coaches because they just want to coach, they don't want a load of registers to fill in, so that's an issue" (*Claire)

The time it can take to work with young people and capture raw data is highlighted through the data analysis as a major issue for deliverers. Mobile technology or "apps" have not been embraced as an alternative or addition for capturing data in the sport for good sector, with most data collection being stored on a clipboard and paper or electronically. An area for exploration within study two will be the efficient use of technology to capture data. Harris & Adams (2016) identify that more work must be

conducted with sport development practitioners, especially around the need for gathering (and using) M & E to inform practice.

Coaches can struggle with the burden of collecting a large amount of M & E data. A member of the SMT will expect a one hundred per cent completion of M & E for all participants on a sports programme, when in reality this figure could be near impossible to achieve, due to the demands of working with potentially ill-disciplined and boisterous groups (Smith & Waddington, 2004). Coaches can also expect pressure to identify and work with participants who may be suitable for case studies, especially participants who may have improved greatly from a sports programme (Coalter, 2013). The participants in this study all have non-delivery roles, and their views on M & E collection, as presented below, may differ from a deliverers perspective:

> *"From a non-delivery perspective it seems to us like it should be quite easy to do. It does not seem that much that you are doing, but I think when you are delivering on the ground it's very challenging as there are some curveballs that can be thrown your way. You are not simply going to have a bunch of perfect young people who are going to complete your every wish immediately. You are dealing with people with different educational backgrounds as well" (Alex)*

This quote identifies a theme that transpires across all of the interviews. Expectancy of non- delivery staff versus the reality of data collection for the practitioners. Even the most basic aspects of M & E (age, name, address, job history) can be hard to achieve if participants do not want to engage (Jeanes & Lindsey, 2014). Important sections of M & E data can be hard to collect; especially when it would appear the young people are not keen on sharing certain information (Kay, 2013);

"The words that they (Young People) use are it's just too long. A registration form may only be two pages, but "TOO LONG!" they will shout. I think that's where the difficulty starts" (Alex)

A coach will have an expectancy to have captured enough basic data with a young person to have a clear baseline to improve on. However, the realities of capturing this data, especially when working with people who may struggle to read and write can be extremely challenging (Levermore, 2011). As noted by Ella, when and how data is collected can be pivotal:

"a lot of our members are really working with the hardest to reach people in society and it might be that that young person sits on the side-lines or just watches for the first three sessions, does not join in at all. If they finally get to the point where they feel comfortable enough to join in with a session, well you don't want to be straight over to them with a questionnaire and asking for all forms of data of them i.e. how old they are, where they come from or if they have a previous criminal conviction. In those kinds of instances, the club leader just wants that young person to keep coming back. That's their priority. So there has to be some form of balance there. I think we haven't cracked the way to capture at the form of delivery yet" (Ella)

Physically collecting the data is an issue that re-appears throughout the data collection. When, how and the intensity of M & E collection were all discussed, with M & E viewed as off-putting for young people, most of whom who just want to take part in a sport activity and not "discuss their feelings " (Barter & Renold, 2000).

"If you are running a Friday night football session with over a hundred lads, and if you turn your back for a minute doing surveys, they could be climbing on or vandalising bus shelters". (Claire)

These quotes support research into M & E in care systems by Cornielje, Velema & Finkenflugel (2008) that identified that fieldworkers are frequently confronted with an overload of work; they work under harsh condition; they often have little formal training; they often work in isolation and receive hardly any support and supervision in their daily community work. They (fieldworkers) hardly had or received insight into the importance of data collection. Receiving feedback about the collected data is very important in order to motivate field workers and subsequently ensure maintenance of a valid and reliable information system (Bloyce & Smith, 2009). The parallels between Cornielje *et al* (2008) findings and the views of coaches collecting sport related M & E are evident. Pressure is applied to project workers to demonstrate that specific funding objectives have been fulfilled (Long *et al*., 2002). A focus on milestones and outputs, therefore, often takes the place of observing and evaluating long-term outcomes and effects (Coalter, 2007)

This theme has highlighted that there would appear to still be a negative attitude towards data collection by practitioners previously identified by Levermore (2011). Again, acknowledging that the participants in this study all admit to having limited personal knowledge on data collection in the toughest conditions. All of the participants in this study were primarily office based and are sharing their experiences of practitioners views who work for their organisations collecting data. An aim of study two will be to witness "M & E data collection at the coal face", and to see if this negativity actually exists, or if this apparent struggle to collect raw data is genuine (Coalter, 2007).

The data in this section reveals a lot of negativity towards M & E reported to the interviewed participants from their delivery teams. The reasoning behind this negativity, when summarising, are difficult to attach to one particular reason. A lack of time to collect the data, participants negative attitudes towards completing M & E, a traditional approach in sport to collect M & E and finally a lack of communication for the need to collect M & E, are discussed in the data as reasons for the negative attitude displayed by deliverers (Coalter, 2007). The participants detail their frustration with the negative attitude towards M & E collection, but then also sympathise with the coaches for some of the conditions they have to work in. The power struggle between the non-delivery and the delivery staff was not an initial question on the semi-structured interview, but the answers developed organically through discussion. It is intriguing to see this standoff develop, the “Expectancy vs Reality”, and this is an area investigated further in study two, analysed through a Foucauldian lens (Manley, 2012).

4.2.3 Social Return on Investment (SROI)/Financial Impact

The next theme under analysis was the participant’s views on SROI. The SROI ratio calculated through a monetised return on a notional £1 worth of investment (Arvidson, 2010). A SROI, in simple terms, is a method for a charity to show its impact from a financial viewpoint. The UK third sector is facing demands for increased accountability and encouraged to scale up in preparation for assuming greater responsibility for public service delivery (Ellis, 2011). In this context, it is easy to see why the simplicity and clarity of SROI is attractive to policy-makers, fundraisers and investors, who are keen to quantify and express social value creation and thus make comparative assessments of social value (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). An SROI can be used on an impact

report, website or press release, and be a “headline grabbing” figure for a charity to present (Arvidson *et al*, 2013). Those involved in the development of SROI have acknowledged that it is easier to accomplish when built on the foundations of a good set of social accounts (Nicholls, 2007; Nicholls, 2009; Ryan & Lyne, 2008).

The SROI guide states that SROI:

> *“will help third sector organisations to communicate better their impact to customers, government and the public, through measuring social and environmental value with confidence, in a standardised way that is easy for all to understand…..also underpin the thinking of commissioners and investors. For the public sector, it will help show us what really matters to the people who use public services and who benefit from third sector activity*” (Byrne & Brennan in Nicholls, *et al*., 2009,p.3)

Ben, below, identifies and discusses the challenges that charities face when analysing programmes by cost, as opposed to social impact.

> *“Talking about the numbers dwindling, well that doesn’t necessarily say that your impact is dwindling on those five, ten or fifteen young people. It may only be that you can only really have a significant impact on such a small amount of people. Rather than having a programme of let’s say one hundred kids. But I don’t think I’m speaking out of term and I know we are probably not alone and other organisations would probably see the programme with one hundred kids as better than say a programme with thirty kids because of the cost saving and the value for the money as you will”. (Ben)*

Impact may be greater with smaller numbers but the charity sector can be reliant on recruiting and working with larger numbers to hit financial incentives. More “targets

achieved" will also appear more prosperous to future investors- but may risk achieving a meaningful social impact (Salway, 2017). A review into M & E by Estrella and Gaventa (1998, p.9) found that there was a growing trend in many management circles towards "*performance based accountability"* and "*management by results*" and that a scarcity of funds leading to a demand for demonstrated success. Ben, above, is open and honest enough to admit that the charity he works for may have a greater "impact" with fewer kids but financially a project with a large, quantitative number would be more appealing to his SMT and finance team.

> *"But you when deal with SROI it is so difficult to demonstrate sometimes. And especially with sort of early interventions programmes or things like that. It is difficult to evidence something that has not yet happened. So there is that and we almost have to make big assumptive leaps with our SROI. We have to make an assumption that by working with "bad" schools and dealing with "bad" kids that they are on the cusp of becoming burdens on society so to speak".* (Ben)

It is difficult to evidence something that has not yet happened, the real key line from that quote. Most of the impact work discussed in these interviews is dealing on hypothetical terms, "Give us (x) amount of money for (y) amount of people and we will make (z) happen". The impact that sport can achieve on young people cannot be predicted in a formula, and charities are struggling to evidence their social impact on young people (Spaaij, 2009). SROI's can help to calculate financial inputs and savings to a local economy but as noted by Ben can be used in a pretentious manner to recruit potential funders;

> *"A lot of people come back to the SROI's and a lot of people are making quite spurious claims. And I think that is because there is a bit of a gap at the moment*

between the science of an SROI and the ability of the staff to complete a proper SROI". (Ben)

The financial prestige and headline-grabbing image of an SROI report can be used as a marketing tool by charities that are advertising for potential investors (King, 2014). An SROI can be a very powerful image to display on an impact report or infomercial. However, as discussed in the data, an SROI can vary in extremity from one charity to another, with research by Gibbon and Dey (2011) identifying that the methodology for completing an SROI can be confusing as there are multiple approaches to how the values can be calculated. Confusion and scepticism towards reporting impact through an SROI is discussed by David below:

Personally I am a bit cynical about just how the meaning behind those kind of figures and those sort of headlines (David)

In complete comparison though, Alex, identifies a SROI as a positive form of impact reporting.

I definitely think it is something that quantifies what you do so in one way it really can add to your impact and add another element to your reporting. Instead of just reporting back numbers, you know you might be down on projected numbers but you can prove that your impact is massive and that's what funders want to see. The impact that you can get is massive (Alex)

The use of positive or negative impact within a SROI calculation is open to manipulation depending upon those doing the calculating. There are unresolved issues around quantification within SROI. The quality and availability of data, the underlying measurement issues, causality and correlation and the timeframe used; are all factors that should lead to users of SROI being cautious when making

comparisons between organisations (Gibbon & Dey, 2011). Gibbon and Dey (2011) agree with quotes by David, that an SROI can be misleading and at times, unreliable. The concern is that the UK and Scottish governments' enthusiastic support for SROI, that assumes all impacts can be financialised, will result in a controlling rather than supportive view of social economy organisations (Pearce, 2009, p.44). As the SROI ratio is a succinct and powerful way of communicating value and achievements, it naturally tends to receive the greatest 'headline' coverage (Lyon and Arvidson, 2011). The SROI Guide emphasises that the ratio should not be seen as the only reason for going through such an assessment (King, 2014). However, arriving at an SROI ratio remains the distinctive feature of the SROI approach, perhaps to the exclusion of other messages (Arvidson *et al*, 2013).

It would appear that participants in this study acknowledge the benefits that a SROI figure can have for their charity, but there is some scepticism towards the use of an SROI. It will be worthwhile tracking and analysing current and future impact reports to see if the monetary figure of an SROI will still have relevance, or if it is an industry buzzword that will lose prestige. This research will aim to update the current viewpoint from medium sized charities on their viewpoint of SROI.

4.2.4 Funders Demands and Requirements for M & E

The final theme under analysis is the need for charities to meet funder's requirements, regarding M & E documents and reporting of financial expenditure. In particular, the discussions tended to focus on the increased competition for funders money (Harlock, 2013). There is a consensus that significant numbers of TSO's are assessing their

impact due to pressures from funders –particularly government funders and commissioners (Ellis and Gregory, 2008; Breckell, Harrison & Robert, 2010). There is a lack of research on precisely what these demands look like in practice, and in what ways these requirements are influencing how TSO's measure and report their impact (Alcock,2010) . Participants in this study discuss how funders are expecting more M & E data for reduced funding.

There are factors why TSO's decide to undertake impact measurement; however, the most significant motivation for organisations appears to be perceived pressure from funders and/or to meet funders' requirements (Lyon *et al.,* 2010; Chapman *et al*., 2010). Walker and Hayton (2017) researched funders demands in the charity sector, interviewing staff members, focusing initially on increased competition for funding:

> *We have to work harder for it and we also have to put a lot more applications in to get your value because of the competition, whereas before they may have been up to £50,000, now a lot of them are up to £10,000 or less. Also in terms of grants, we've had to rely a lot more on the smaller charitable trusts and organisations, but the problem with that is because of lack of funding, there's much more of the third sector organisation going for the same grants and there's only so many of them.* (Sport Development Manager, Walker & Hayton 2017).

The recent work by Walker and Hayton (2017) identifies similar themes to the findings in this analysis; charities are constantly struggling to prove their impact and are in constant competition for dwindling amounts of funding money. The quote below emphasises the link in the findings:

"We live in a competitive environment, I think the charity sector, whether it is a good or a bad thing, is becoming more competitive". (Ben).

Later in the same interview Ben also identifies and discusses how because of the rise in competition (for funding), M & E departments have had to "up their game":

"And now it's quite a competitive market evidence and impact and that's just reflective of the whole sector becoming more engaged in it and funders becoming a little bit more educated into what is a good ask, what is over asking and the sort of things that a good charity or a good programme should be demonstrating as well rather than these questions like "Do your kids feel happier?"…Yeah they do, so what!? So what if they feel happier, there are other things that they should be looking for". (Ben).

Charities now have to evidence greater and greater impact to potentially win future investors and keep ahead of competitors (Arvidson, 2009). Funders are starting to ask for more measureable and sometimes hard to reach outcomes (Alcock, 2010). A charity that has a strong background of collecting M & E that can demonstrate their competence and achievements will evidently be a "safer bet" for a funder.

"One of the main challenges for working with NEETS is that funders need to see young people getting into jobs as quick as you can and that is the challenging bit. What we almost find is that you need eight weeks to get through to a young person. And then following that one to one sessions and then mentoring but your funding might only be for a year or something. And you know that a young person might not get a job until after six months so you can't record that as an outcome….The main challenge is that some funders are not interested in the journey; they just want a positive outcome immediately" (Alex)

This point on short-term cycles is also commented on by David:

> *"The funding cycles are generally only a year at a time. And that's the problem isn't it?" (David)*

The issue of short term funding cycles and funders expectations for immediate results was a problem discussed at length. The longer-term impacts of working with people through the power of sport were often ignored or overlooked, with the sector being drawn into a "what works quickest and cheapest mentality" (Lynch-Cerullo & Cooney, 2011). Softer outcomes, such as increased confidence or self-esteem in a participant were not valued externally. Funders, as highlighted in research by Dacombe (2011) and Alcock (2010) are expecting tangible and almost immediate results.

> *"I think that what funders are starting to realise, and even with some of the work that we do, because of the intensity in order to bring about real change in young people's lives through sport, then you are going to get fewer people for higher quality outcomes. And I think that funders are starting to recognise that. But it's hard for our members to have the confidence to say, "We can do this for you for ten young people", because when typically people get used to value for money and that kind of thing" (Ella)*

However, Ella has noticed a shift in funder's expectations towards a "less can be more" approach. To instigate a real change in a young person's life may only be possible if you are working with a smaller number of cohorts. Ella's viewpoint that funders are starting to focus on a more intense delivery method for smaller groups is at contrast with Alex, Ben's and David's quotes that funders are keen to see a return on as large a number of participants as possible.

"Yeah absolutely (M & E can help attract future funding streams). And we try and promote that with our projects, we say to them (deliverers) that it's not just about you sending your data up to us, that is not just the purpose of it, it's about being able to evidence your impact locally so that you can maybe go to a local authority or a police crime commissioner (PCC) to get some money". (Claire)

Survey findings that reveal an increased interest in impact measurement among TSOs (Ógáin *et al*., 2012) are perhaps unsurprising. While TSOs may be motivated to measure their impact for a variety of reasons, survey evidence from NPC on third sector impact measurement practices reveals that the main driver is the requirements of funders (Ógáin *et al*., 2012: 18). While the survey identified a range of other potential motives for impact measurement – including prioritisation by the board, a desire to keep up with good practice or as a means to ascertain the difference their work is making – it found that funder requirements is significantly more important than any other factor in driving third sector measurement practices.

4.3 Summary of Study One

This analysis has attempted to present themes discussed by third sector industry insiders, detailing their experiences with M & E. The findings concur with similar research by Coalter (2007), Collins (2011) and Kay (2009) that M & E can be a difficult process, with the charities interviewed, in particular, struggling to identify and present the long-term social impact that they are achieving.

The charities interviewed also do not seem to have identified a suitable data collection method, that is time efficient but suitable for all the stakeholders involved. Young

people attending sessions ran by the charities do not enjoy completing M & E forms, and this can be transcended onto the sports coach/practitioners, who have the task of collecting the essential M & E data. The charities have discussed the external pressures they face to meet funders M & E requirements, and the impact that this can have on their staff (Arvidson, 2009). This analysis has highlighted a variety of negative themes attached to M & E collection in the third sector. The positive findings are that most of the charities interviewed see the benefits of completing M & E as an internal improvement technique that M & E is not just used to please funders, that M & E, when conducted well, can be used to drive charities and improve delivery.

The themes presented in this analysis will now form a major part of study two, which will be an Action Research (AR) study of a Birmingham based sports themed employability charity. The themes will be used for an initial discussion with the staff at S4L, to greater understand if they all face the same complexities with M & E data within their roles.

5 Study Two

5.1 Introduction to Study Two

Study two, an action research study completed at a Midlands based sports themed employability charity, uses the findings of study one to further investigate the realities of collecting M & E data in the third sector. The issues and themes that the charities discussed in the interviews for study one are examined through an in-depth Action Research period. The Action Research will allow the thesis the opportunity to greater understand the realities of M & E collection within the third sector, and in collaboration with the host charity aim to improve their key services; namely, how they collate M &

E data and greater evidence their social impact. The issues mentioned around data collection, primarily the suits vs tracksuits discussion are reviewed. The chapter is presented through a first person narrative.

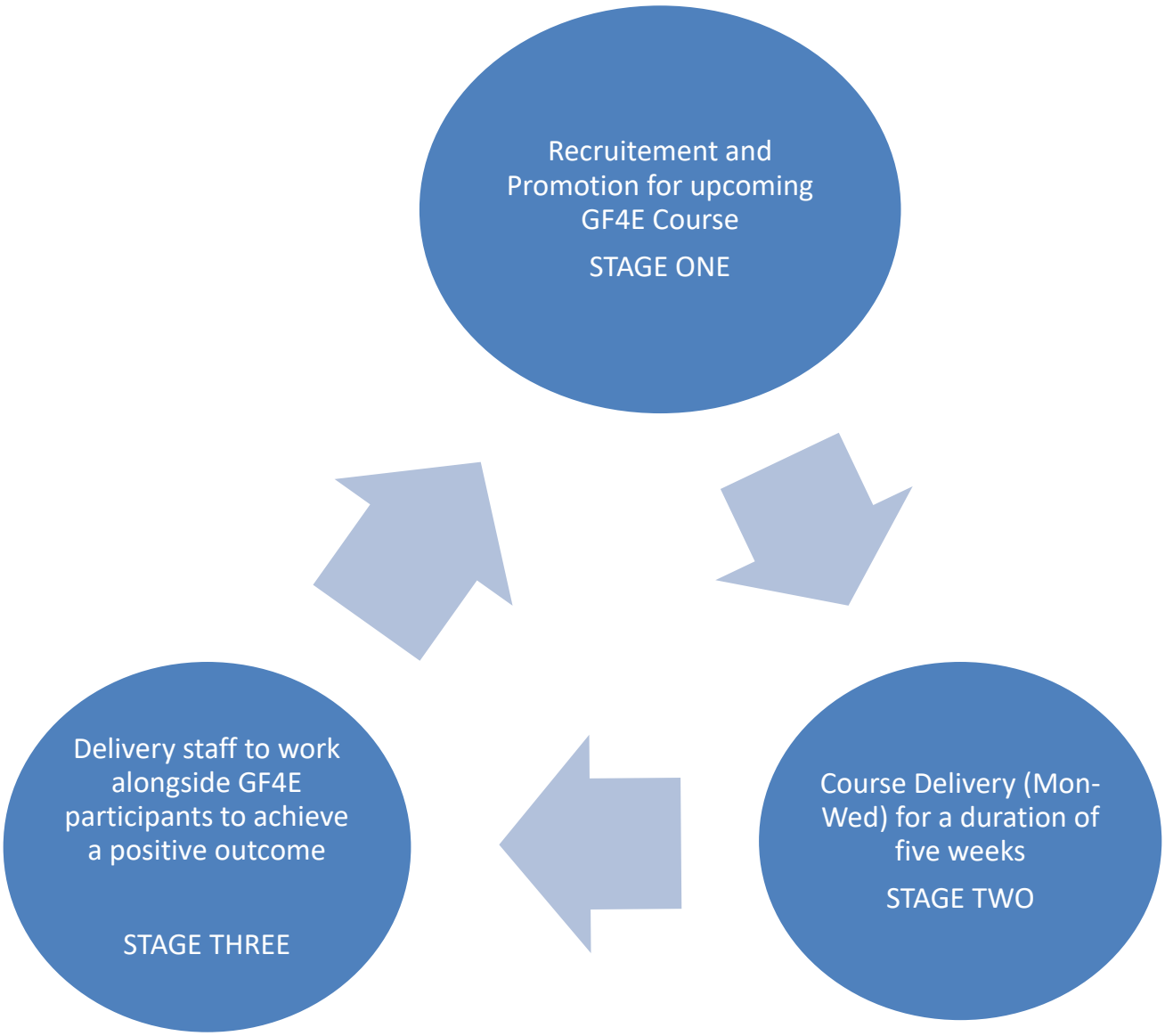
The combination of Action Research, and how it was conducted at S4L, are then discussed. The chapter will conclude by looking at the ethical issues faced when completing Action Research.

5.2 Time Span of Research Conducted

The action research was conducted from May 2017 until completion in March 2018 (See Appendix Seven for a detailed timeline). This was a research period that lasted nearly eleven months, with the researcher being in situ at the host organisation for four days a week, with one day spent on reflections and writing periods at the university.

Figure Two: Delivery Cycle for Sport 4 Life GF4E Courses

This image depicts the delivery cycle of a S4L Get Fit 4 Employment course (GF4E), showing the circular stages of recruitment, delivery and outcomes/evaluation.



5.3 Ethical Considerations

A full and detailed ethics proposal was submitted to the University's Ethics Committee before the research placement commenced. After acquiring ethical approval the researcher then took the following actions:

The researcher and the planned research agenda were presented at a full staff meeting, so all staff and volunteers were fully aware of the study's intentions and methods for data collection (interviews, observations, field notes). Each member of staff signed an informed consent sheet which detailed that the study would protect anonymity throughout and that they were free to withdraw at any given time. The researcher was fully overt when in research mode. All course participants were informed that a researcher was present at the onset of a new S4L course.

5.4 Action Research Cycle One Overview: Table Four (May-August 2017)

Table Four: Action Research Cycle One

The table below presents the reader with a key summary of the proposed actions that the researcher aimed to complete across cycle one:

Objectives	Research Participants	Lewin's Model of AR
Identify and discuss what S4L SMT are hoping to achieve from the Action Research.	S4L SMT	Identifying a general or initial idea
Present my research aims to all S4L staff and discuss my methods for data collection.	All S4L staff	Planning
Interview all S4L staff to discuss their opinions on M & E and its influences on their work.	All S4L staff	Reconnaissance or fact finding
Acclimatise to the working culture at S4L and fully integrate myself as a researcher.	All S4L staff, especially delivery staff I will be researching.	Planning
Observe M & E conducted with NEETS at a GF4E course.	S4L delivery staff & NEET participants	Reconnaissance or fact finding
Identify strategic action points that will help S4L improve	All S4L staff	Identifying a general or initial idea
Evaluation of Cycle One	Researcher	Evaluate

Table Four: Action Research Cycle One Overview (May-August 2017)

5.5 Identify and Discuss what S4L SMT are Hoping to Achieve from the Action Research.

Action Research should be collaborative, with all stakeholders working towards to the same desired outcomes (McNiff, 2013). I decided that my priority was to consult with

the S4L SMT. It was vital for the research and for my inauguration as a researcher that I had the full support from the S4L SMT. Of greater importance was the need to identify some areas of development at S4L driven from an intrinsic desire to improve.

A meeting with Fraser and Frank (2/4's of the SMT) was arranged in my first week. This meeting was conducted formally in the S4L boardroom, and lasted for over ninety minutes. Fraser and Frank discussed the core values and origins of S4L, before presenting me with their intentions to move very deliberately towards capturing measurable outcomes. The meeting was conducted professionally, with my input focused around the practicalities of Action Research and my commitment to ensuring anonymity was protected for staff. Our initial conversations were on how "soft and fluffy" S4L had been in the past with regards M & E collection. Funders were interested in participation numbers and M & E was not documented formally when S4L originated ten years ago. The M & E at S4L now had to be more stringent, with S4L being measured (and in some cases) funded by the amount of hard outcomes they could achieve.

Fraser and Frank were interested in a collaborative discussion on M & E and the impact on deliverers. Frank in particular was keen for me to analyse and report on contrasting approaches of deliverers regarding their M & E methods. The action research model was discussed, especially the research/observe/reflect and collaborate idea that is then replicated when a change is made. We agreed on a reconnaissance period, in order to witness and discuss M & E collection with S4L staff. Fraser and Frank were presented with my planned research timeline. It was confirmed that I would be added to all future M & E meetings.

I then met separately with another member of the SMT, Sam, who is head of M & E and insight at S4L. Sam suggested some possible research avenues: Delivery Staff vs Non-Delivery Staff or "Expectancy (of M & E) vs Reality (Of M & E Collection). Sam admitted that he himself was guilty at times of expecting the M & E to be “quite straightforward” to complete and was interested in finding out if this was true (or not). We both agreed that this could be a great angle to consider and to explore. The second suggestion was exploring how new (recently employed) S4L Staff approach M & E in comparison to staff who have been working at S4L for a longer time period. Sam discussed openly that some members of staff have been working at S4L when M & E data collection was not so important. The mentality towards collecting M & E data and evidencing impact, Sam suggested, may differ between old S4L staff (been working at S4L for approximately 5-10 years) in comparison to newer S4L staff (2 years at S4L or less).

Lastly, I wanted to discuss with a key member of the delivery team my action research proposals. I would be shadowing/observing Simon for his next GF4E course, so a meeting was arranged. We discussed our professional backgrounds to begin with, both sharing an interest in football coaching, and Simon talked me through his work so far at S4L (Simon had been in post for twelve months). Simon was very keen to learn from the research and was more than happy to partake. We agreed that I would attend his next GF4E course, starting the following week in Witton, Birmingham.

I was pleased that I had met with the majority of the senior management at S4L, and my research ideas, whilst vague at this moment, were welcomed and I would soon be entering the research field with an inquisitive state of mind. We agreed that we would

all meet again after I had conducted my initial interviews and GF4E observations to discuss the action research proposals further.

5.6 Present Research Aims to S4L Staff and Discuss Data Collection Methods.

This was my first opportunity to discuss my planned research to the group as a whole, at the annual staff meeting. I wanted to convey that my research would be non-intrusive and that staff should conduct their work as usual. Sam introduced me as “the David Attenborough of S4L”. I explained that I would be present at S4L in a research capacity for a twelve-month period, and that I hoped to add value to S4L by contributing, in a collaborative manner, ideas for improvement.

I then got the group (16 in total) to divide into two equal groups. I deliberately designed the groups to be a mixture of delivery and non-delivery staff. Both groups were distributed flipcharts and pens, and asked to brainstorm on the following areas, before swapping over. How can S4L greater track the long term impact that attending an S4L course can achieve for a young person? How can the use of technology greater improve the M & E at S4L?

The results provoked interesting discussions and the exercise allowed the S4L staff the opportunity to become aware of my research and contribute positive ideas for improvement. My presentation was warmly received and I was confident that every member of the S4L team would be willing to contribute to the study.

5.7 Interview S4L Staff

I interviewed all staff to gather their consensus on M & E at S4L. I wanted to understand how M & E affected their day-to-day role. I was particularly interested on any suggestions or improvements they could offer for M & E at S4L. I was also keen to hear any concerns or criticisms, as well as attempting to understand the importance that a staff member placed on M & E. A pilot interview conducted with Simon allowed me the opportunity to review the questions and answers (Appendix Eight). The interviews and gathering staff feedback on M & E were a vital part of the Action Research study. This was the opportunity to collate and contrast views on M & E, and to search for commonalities or areas for improvement. The responses helped to identify areas of strength and guide the direction of the action research project.

The transcribed interviews were inputted on to the NVIVO database. The interviews were then read and re-read for full data immersion. The data was coded and stored on NVIVO, using an inductive approach. The emergent codes were then re-analysed for suitability and clarity. The codes were then grouped into themes, after I had utilised a cut and paste approach, with codes being assigned a relevant theme (see Chapter Eight for results). The data analysis was completed via the same method as study one (3.9 Data Analysis-Study One). The emergent themes presented below:

- Improvements to M & E
- Honesty and clarity in M & E
- Funders demands and external pressure to complete M & E
- The vision of growth for S4L and the pressure for SMT to achieve this
- Engaging and working with young people
- Evidencing a social impact

- The relationship between deliverers & non-deliverers and staff attitude towards M & E
- Negative opinions towards M & E
- Positive opinions towards M & E

A selection of quotes derived from the interviews are presented in more detail below:

5.7.1 Discussions from Staff Interviews:

There was a lot of conversation, particularly from members of the SMT, on the need to demonstrate evidence to acquire future funding. Evidence, especially when it displays hard outcomes, was viewed as vital for the growth of S4L; evidence is used to display that S4L are a “safe bet” for any future investors and can complete what they intend to achieve. The key phrase I identified “no one gives you anything for nothing anymore” is not only a reference to the current financial climate but could also be perceived as a reference to when S4L had to do very little to justify any funding, as they were working in a “sports for sports sake” policy environment.

> *I mean collecting that data and having that impact is so important for what you do moving forward. Its evidence, as no one gives you anything for nothing anymore. That is a driving force for getting funding.* (S4L SMT, 2017)

A separate quote below, from another SMT member, further demonstrates the importance placed on positive M & E for securing funding. Stronger M & E is crucial for the organisation to develop in size and structure;

Because if we get good M & E in and we evidence it then we are more likely to get funding and we are more likely to grow (S4L SMT, 2017)

All staff (suits and tracksuits) acknowledged that it was vital to evidence their work in order to grow. It was also discussed how difficult it was to find the appropriate balance for M & E collection:

It's trying to find the balance between what funders require and the quality of the outcomes we provide versus the practicality of staff being able to do it and not putting off beneficiaries who engage because we are asking them to fill in a shed load of paperwork. So that's one of the main challenges. (S4L SMT, 2017)

This honesty highlighted the challenges that S4L faced. How do they capture enough M & E data to evidence an impact to funders without making it too onerous for their staff and beneficiaries? S4L staff and the YP involved on courses can face the risk of M & E paperwork overload. The balancing act between too much or too little M & E paperwork is an area investigated in more detail later on in the thesis.

The quote below, I believe, acknowledges that S4L, share a similarity with the findings from study one, in that the importance of collecting M & E data can at times not be transpired from top to bottom:

And I would add to that, that is not always down to them but it can also be a communication thing, so do I and the team always communicate really well how

> *important it is to collect the data, or do we just say "if you don't collect that data we won't be funded again"* (S4L SMT, 2017).

This quote links in with the Foucauldian concepts of power (Manley, 2013), in that the non-collection of M & E could lead to a future lack of funding, which would (or could) ultimately result in job losses. The admission that there was a communication breakdown from a member of the S4L Senior Management Team was an important area of improvement to focus on for the Action Research process.

The final concluding quote derived from the interview data emphasises the need for the charity to add tangible outcomes to evidence their social impact.

> *A fluffy statement saying that people are happier at the end of a course...so what? It needs to lead to something, and it needs to link with what you do, so we are S4L and we do employment, and our end goal is, the biggest statistic that I would want to see if I was sitting on a funding panel is how many YP actually get into employment?* (S4L Non-Delivery, 2017)

This quote summarises the importance for S4L to ensure that their evidence base was satisfying funder's demands. The paradox of working with Birmingham's most disadvantaged NEETS, but having contractual demands to ensure that they move into the workplace (or job-related training) was similar to research conducted by Costas Battle (2019) in London. Costas Battle (2019) work also reports that funders expect and demand a return for their investment, leaving charities in a difficult state of flux,

where they may ‘navigate’ towards NEETS who are easier to get into the workplace, and meet funders targets, than the actual clientele that *really* need them.

5.8 Observe M & E Being Conducted with NEETS at a GF4E Course

The next stage of data collection was to observe a full GF4E course, conducted at an external location, a youth centre in Witton, Birmingham. The course was delivered over a five-week period, with the programme days being Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Simon and Ian were the course delivery team. I met them directly at the youth centre after walking up the long Witton road from the train station. Walking towards the youth centre, I noticed that the local area looked run down, with a very high percentage of BAME residents and a large unemployment rate (Birmingham.Gov).

Simon and Ian, and the outreach co-ordinator Charlotte, met me and explained the plan for the day ahead. Charlotte was expecting around twenty YP (Young People) to attend, working her figures around the amount of YP who had completed a pre-course EOI (Expression of Interest). The S4L staff looked a little disappointed when only twelve people had arrived by the 10:30am start time. Initially I felt nervous, and I positioned myself in the corner of the small classroom, as the deliver Simon went through some of the course rules and regulations. Simon then introduced me to the group as a University researcher who was looking at how S4L conduct M & E. Simon and Ian then started some icebreaker games, which I joined in with. This activity was helpful, as you were tasked with completing a sheet that meant you discussed an item

with every person in the room. Whilst I had documented that I would not be using the YP for research purposes, so I had no need to form any relationships with the YP, I was fully aware that it would be beneficial to have my presence accepted by the group, and not to remain as a silent observer.

The course was very deliberately low on M & E on the first day, with Simon confiding in me “You don’t want to scare away the YP on the first day by presenting them with a load of paperwork and forms to fill in”. The YP then went onto participate in some more icebreaker tasks, this time practically in the sports hall. The afternoon session completed back in the classroom was a group discussion, led by Simon, on leadership skills.

My field note from my journal summarises my thoughts at the time:

> *I felt a good rapport was developing between the NEETS and I, my micro delivery on the sport sessions and the feedback I offered on how well they had led their sport sessions had started to formulate a working relationship. The group were co-operative and forthcoming with opinions...however I was fighting the urge, due to my teaching/lecturing background to actively deliver the sessions...I had to remind myself that was not my role* (Field Note, May 2017)

I had to reign in my natural instincts to deliver to the YP and to position myself correctly as a researcher.

The third day of the course allowed me the opportunity to witness the first real M & E collection. Simon informed me that the focus was on one to one briefings with participants on the course, on an individual hourly basis, using the Outcome Star (OS) as the data collection tool. The OS asks the YP to grade themselves on a scale of 1 to 5. The measures are as follows: Communication, Employment Skills, Well-Being,

Future Dreams, Alcohol and Drugs, helpfulness. The OS was used to get a base point for young people. The YP shown their completed OS and the figures, and are then tasked with completing an Action Plan i.e. Improve your confidence by talking more amongst the group. S4L utilise the OS data in their impact reports, with an improvement on the OS credited as an "achieved outcome". The OS is designed to allow YP the chance to reflect and to plan for their careers (Appendix Three).

My observations on the initial OS data collection exercise are presented by my reflective research journal, which I completed immediately after leaving the youth centre:

> *OS (Outcome Star) can be very long-winded and timely but does seem to be very user friendly and allows the deliverer a real opportunity to engage with the YP (young person).*
>
> *The OS, although time consuming, was a great opportunity for the YP to lose some of their bravado they can show in the class environment and focus on their careers. It is also an opportunity, I felt, for a deliverer to really engage and get to know a YP. I had to think on my feet a little with the data collection; however I felt I handled the M & E role well.*
>
> *The YP did not seem overawed with the M & E and seemed to enjoy the chance to reflect and discuss their strengths and weaknesses with an experienced voice to help guide them.* (Field Note, May 2017)

I had also noticed how through the use of an OS a Young Person could increase their self-confidence. The positive reinforcement offered from Simon and Ian seemed to have a very positive affect on the YP involved. One YP in particular mentioned that it was nice to receive praise and he enjoyed working through the OS to reflect on his

strengths. *"Man, it is nice to receive all this praise you know; I'm feeling good about myself"* (NEET Participant, May 2017).

For some of the OS though I have to question how much of the OS is guided by the M & E deliverer. Is the S4L deliverer guilty of over talking during the OS? Perhaps the YP should digest the OS at a pace more suitable to them, or under less guidance. Perhaps the YP are guilty of trying to please the M & E deliverer with their answers. My initial thoughts on the M & E process after the first two weeks of the NEETS programme were positive. The YP are not burdened with M & E nor are they asked to complete OS every day. They are able to enjoy the course and to gain skills along the journey.

As the GF4E course progressed, with employment activities, sport leader qualifications and field trips taking place I began to notice a re-occurring trend. There was very little opportunity for the YP to discuss their career ambitions and agree achievable outcomes with the S4L delivery staff. Some of the YP seem very relaxed and almost nonchalant on their career prospects. Whilst some seem to have set the standards a little too high at this moment (University Lecturer, Policeman) others seem to display little knowledge on the job market and their prospects. I noticed that hardly any discussion had been on exit routes or outcomes. Simon and Ian were leaving all discussions on exit routes until the end of the GF4E course and I could not help but question if this was the best form of practice. Towards the end of the course, I had developed a strong relationship with all of the NEETS on the course. I was often spending some of the break times playing pool with the YP, and informally discussing their backgrounds and ambitions, alongside other S4L staff members. Whilst each YP

was certainly individual, I will attempt to contextualise the cultural attitude across the group with the following direct quotes:

> *"Oh you're doing another course here (Witton) soon, I will be here for that then as well innit"* (NEET Participant, April 2017)

I felt that this YP was completely missing the point that the aim of the course is to get them back into employment/training. This could be viewed in a positive light that the course has been so enjoyable that the YP wants to return, or it could just be that this YP has no particular desire to work full time and is a "social loafer". I felt this informal quote also revealed that perhaps S4L were not making their GF4E courses outcome focused enough.

> *"I don't want to work no more than 16 hours as I want to keep all of my benefits"* (NEET Participant, April 2017)

The above quote made me realise that the career aspirations for some of the YP on the course were low. They had been ‘trapped’ into a cycle of claiming benefits, and could see no form of training or future employment that would break this cycle, similar to findings on NEET research conducted by Avila & Rose (2019) and Robertson (2018).

5.8.1 Red, Amber, Green (RAG) Rating

I began to discuss with Simon and Ian a traffic light system that grades YP on their entry to a GF4E course. It was apparent that some of the NEETS on the course were still going to be not ready for work after completing the GF4E course. This could have been for a variety of reasons (long-standing substance abuse, large periods of unemployment, lack of formal qualifications, mental health issues). However, a section of the YP would certainly have no problem achieving work placements or enrolments onto educational courses. I felt it would be beneficial for the deliverers to 'grade' the YP: Red: This YP will need a lot of support to achieve an outcome: Amber: This YP will be ready to achieve an outcome after some additional support: Green: This YP will be ready to achieve an outcome immediately after completing a GF4E course.

By 'grading' the NEETS the deliverers would then be able to discuss any difficulties securing hard outcomes with the S4L SMT. Naturally if a deliverer has a cohort of Red/Amber they (the participants) are going to need further additional support (in the form of one to one mentoring) than a cohort of Amber/Green. This RAG rating system, would also allow the tracksuits the opportunity to feedbacks to the suits on the current NEETs that they are working with. It will also allow S4L the opportunity to greater profile their learners and feedback to funders, using a certified intake assessment process.

5.8.2 Positionality and Becoming Attached

As the course neared completion, S4L received positive news that one of the YP on the course had secured a work placement (traineeship) at a local Sports Employer. I was pleased with this outcome and felt a sense of personal pride that the course was starting to show successful outcomes. This made me realise that far from being a

distanced researcher I was now starting to experience emotions (joy in this case) for the YP and S4L.

Was there now a conflict of interest? Was I now too involved in the course? Personally, I did not think so. The nature of the course, the longevity spent with the YP and the small amount of YP on the course meant it was only natural that some form of deliverer/participant relationship was going to form. I consciously only offered input to discussions when asked to by Simon, but working alongside the YP, completing work booklets and joining in practical sessions (when necessary due to low numbers) meant a rapport was formed. In my opinion, this did not stop me from casting a critical eye over the M & E conducted. The YP mentioned above, was chosen to be a case study participant for S4L. The YP has been on a productive journey with S4L and was now very confident. They led practical sessions well and had previously attended a S4L course where they undertook a FA Football Level 1 coaching award. The question was how could S4L now evidence the impact that they have had on this YP? Without S4L what would the YP be doing currently? Had the current M & E system captured this journey?. How can S4L attribute their intervention to this young person's change in confidence and work readiness.

5.9 Identify Strategic Action Points to Improve S4L

After completing semi-structured interviews with the staff, observations, discussions with SMT and desktop research I concluded that S4L needed to initially improve in the

following areas: An earlier focus was needed for job (or training) outcomes with GF4E attendees. This could be conducted in the form of a group discussion, but I felt it was vital that S4L attempted to understand the possible EET destinations for their participants at the onset of a course. Dedicated support and contacts should be offered throughout the course, in order to allow the NEET YP the optimum opportunity to gain an outcome post-course. Additionally, a more coherent system for keeping in touch with YP who had attended an S4L course was needed in order to measure and evidence long term sustainable impact. Currently, GF4E participants, on completion of the course had no viable form of keeping in touch with Sport 4 Life, apart from a sporadic phone call to the GF4E course deliverer. The longer-term impact of a S4L course was not being measured. Lastly, further investigation was needed between the possible tension I had noticed between the M & E collectors and the M & E users (suits and tracksuits). Originating from the interview data, and from my initial meetings with the SMT, I highlighted a power imbalance.

5.10 Evaluation of Cycle One

Cycle one was an integral part of the action research period, ensuring my presence as a researcher was accepted and acknowledged by all, and that key targets for improvement were identified and detailed. The cycle validates that action research differs to other forms of research with the constant reviewing of practice (McNiff, 2016). The research was very much exploratory, and even though some initial concepts were discussed at the onset, it was not until I formally entered the field and witnessed the realities of capturing data that clear and focused research ideas evolved. I can though identify with the quote from Rogers (2012):

> *In hindsight, my pre-occupation with the need for AR to be emergent and responsive to the group's interests led to avoidance of planning. It also made my early discussions with participants tentative and unspecific regarding my potential role and I may not have provided them with a clear enough picture of how I could be involved and what 'collaborative AR' meant. While AR should be flexible, firmer ideas about the type of AR I wanted to do, in this particular context, and better communication of my aims would have probably resulted in more effective collaboration; 'research designs do not just emerge' (memo, 6 June 2009). (Rogers, 2012, p.78).*

Perhaps I was also guilty of just expecting the action research concepts to "emerge". S4L have an award winning system for their M & E, and a strong and sound collection system in place. Attempting to identify areas of improvement was proving to be difficult. The work of Bogdan and Biklen (1982) helped me to concentrate on the areas that I could improve:

> *In analysis in the field, the authors suggest that the researcher needs to be constantly engaging in preliminary analytic strategies during data collection. Such strategies include: forcing oneself to narrow down the focus of the study; continually reviewing field notes in order to determine whether new questions could fruitfully be asked; writing memos about what you have found out in relation to various issues (this is a grounded theory tactic); and trying out emergent ideas (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982)*

Cycle two will now be discussed in detail. At no point did I mention to any of the S4L delivery team that I was transitioning to another “cycle”. I remained a constant presence at S4L, working from my office desk or completing site visits.

6 Study Two Cycle Two

6.1 Action Research Cycle Two Overview: Table Five (September 2017-December 2017)

The second action research cycle was an opportunity to explore the data and viewpoints presented in the staff interviews. It offered the opportunity to observe M & E data collected on a second GF4E course. Whilst there were still exploratory periods of the AR within the second cycle, this cycle focused on the "doing", with the ideas for improvement highlighted in cycle one acted upon in cycle two. The key objectives, are presented in table five, with each objective discussed in detail below.

Table Five: Action Research Cycle Two

Objective	Research Participants	Lewin's Model of AR
Monitor Improvements in the Outcome Star	S4L Delivery Staff & SMT	Planning
Implement 10 Year Plan into GF4E Course	S4L Delivery Staff	Take first action step
Attend and Observe second GF4E Course and Observe Different Deliverers and Dealing with Access Problems	S4L Delivery Staff	Reconnaissance or fact finding
Formation of Impact Committee	SMT	Take first action step
Investigate a Strategy for Long Term Impact Tracking	S4L Delivery Staff	Identifying a general or initial idea
Evaluation of Cycle Two	Researcher	Evaluate

Table Five: Action Research Cycle Two Overview (September 2017-December 2017)

6.2 Monitor Improvements in the Outcome Star

Sam invited me to be part of a discussion group that was changing the wording of the organisational OS. Present at the meeting were the deliverers who would be engaging with YP for the OS. The session, led by Sam, discussed the OS improvements that would represent S4L with more suitable wording. It was agreed that the questioning need to better align with S4L values. The big difference for S4L is that the OS values are now going to be measured as a quantitative figure to track the progress for YP. Therefore, the YP might mark themselves (with the help of a member of staff) as a 2 for confidence at the start of the course but then have improved to a 4 by the end of the course. Before, the OS was used purely as a mentoring tool, however now it will be part of the M & E package at S4L, with an improvement in the numerical scoring associated to the impact that S4L have had on a YP.

This meeting was an attempt to re-define the wording in the categories and for deliverers to standardise the marking system, to try to keep it equal across S4L, so there would not be a wide range of scores across the teams. Deliverers were encouraged to keep the scores relatively low, especially to begin. This was opposite to what I had witnessed on my first NEET site visits, with a lot of YP scoring themselves as 4/5's for many of the OS.

The first OS is conducted three days into a GF4E, used as a baseline score. Sam highlighted that at this point, whilst still very early on, an S4L programme could have already had an impact on an OS score. However, deliverers all agree that completing an OS any earlier would be impractical. The OS will still be conducted twice, once at the beginning and then again near the end of a GF4E programme. The delivery group

agreed it would now be very hard for a YP to score a five on any of the OS. The group seemed happy to work through this project. Some of the deliverers mentioned the difficulty that they can have with YP doing an OS, mostly through the YP scoring themselves too high.

After witnessing a volume of completed OS, I noted down two questions in my journal. Who is monitoring and reviewing the Actions/Targets set by the deliverer and YP? How are these assessed and set?

I intended to identify the answers, as I currently felt that the action points were very dependent on the deliverer completing them. They were added to an OS, with an action date and saved on the user's portal. However, I felt like they were then "forgotten" about, until the deliverer completed the next OS, leaving me questioning just how much "action" actually resolved from the meetings. I made a note in my research journal to discuss this with the deliverers and SMT and to review the progress.

6.3 Implement 10 Year Plan into GF4E Course

After collaborative discussions and reflections on cycle one, I decided a vital element of the GF4E course needed improvement. I found it concerning that on a course focused towards gaining employment there was little discussion with the YP on their long-term career aspirations. In particular, from an M & E perspective, the first planned OS could be better utilised if the delivery team had a greater knowledge set on the YP's ideal exit destination.

A pilot scheme for discussing (and recording) career aspirations was completed with eight NEETS in the fifth week of the first GF4E course I attended. The pilot was used to assess ease of use, formulate discussions and to explore if the YP enjoyed, and most importantly, learned anything from the exercise. The exercise was a success, due to its simplicity to complete and the group rapport it formed, and was given the working title “The 10 Year Plan” (Appendix Nine).

With the authorisation of Simon and Ian, I would present the 10YP to the next GF4E group, on their second day of the course. I hoped that by delivering the 10YP so early into a GF4E course would help achieve: Immediately present the deliverers with informed knowledge on a YP career aspirations; The first OS would be more productive, with a deliverer able to discuss college courses or employment, and action points agreed; Increased group collaboration, with the 10YP being completed individually, but then presenting their work and their “hopes and dreams” in front of the group; The YP would focus on their exit routes, and would be able to identify strengths and weaknesses that the S4L staff can help with, instead of just “coasting through” a GF4E course; The YP will have a clearer and more defined idea on what they can realistically attempt to achieve, and a plan will emerge on how to make this achievable.

6.4 Attend and Observe second GF4E Course and Dealing with Access Issues

I intended to observe as many of the NEET delivery team as possible conducting live M & E. I had only managed to observe Simon and Ian, however I was in regular discussions with the other two delivery teams, and I was beginning to confirm official site visits when I received an email from one of the delivery teams. The email, whilst

very courteous, made it apparent that my presence as a researcher was not welcome. The main reasons detailed were the need for confidentiality when conducting one to ones with YP and the fact that my attendance may be unsettling.

I arranged a meeting with the staff leader of the delivery team to discuss the matter; I agreed that I did not want to be intrusive and that I had managed to counteract this on other NEETS courses by being there for the whole five weeks as a member of the S4L team. We agreed to review my visits later and to see if there were any alternatives. However, the next course for this delivery team was a Dame Kelly Holmes Trust programme, where the M & E is completed differently to S4L's. The denial of access was something I had not actually considered when I had asked to complete some drop in M & E sessions. It does make sense, in that the OS can discuss personal issues. I could have been forceful and consulted the SMT to discuss my denial of access. I had worked hard to establish a relationship with all of the S4L staff so I could gain access when required. The only NEET delivery team that welcomed my presence were Simon and Ian. I needed to reflect hard on why this was not the case, and what I could have improved on. I started to question if my positionality was too close to the SMT. Was I now thought of by the delivery team as the SMT's pair of eyes on the ground. I had constantly emphasised in meetings and open discussions that my research aimed to identify areas of development for S4L as an organisation, not focusing on individuals/delivery teams. Establishing open and honest access to research was difficult, especially with two of the delivery teams.

The inability to gain access in AR is discussed by Rapoport (1970) who identified that the 'cold scientist might not be allowed to penetrate the system'. Kemmis (2006) and

Maguire (2006) both also detail access issues that they faced throughout their careers as action researchers. I would reflect on these texts and continue to complete AR to the best of my capabilities.

6.5 Investigate Model Delivery Change

The CEO invited me to a meeting to discuss a potential delivery model change, which would significantly change how S4L currently worked with NEETS and would affect how they collect M & E data. The proposal was only a draft at this stage, but Fraser excitedly shared his plans on flipchart paper and we started to discuss the positives and negatives.

The change would involve YP working one to one with a mentor. A mentor would work with a YP, having regular meetings to help them progress into education, work or further training. There would be no set start dates, and every YP journey would be very different. Some YP may need a very high amount of support, whereas other YP may need only a few sessions with their mentor. Currently, the NEET delivery staff work on a cycle of recruit, deliver and then mentor, before they start the process all over again. However there have been concerns from the SMT, that some delivery staff have started to use the post-delivery phase (mentoring) to "unwind and relax a little after delivering such a hectic course" (Direct Interview Quote, Field Notes). The NEET deliverers had also expressed their concerns to me with the current model. They felt an immediate pressure, post-course, to immediately start recruiting and promoting their next GF4E course, to ensure that they had a large enough group of NEETS to work with.

I found the discussion on the proposed model change very interesting. I reported to the CEO that the YP might miss the peer-to-peer support. I also notified Fraser that the recent Street League Report (2018) discussed how much importance the NEETS placed on working in small groups to improve their employability skills. However, I did acknowledge there could be an improvement in successful outcomes with a focused approach to mentoring, especially as some of the YP on a GF4E course would appear to be “work ready” from the moment they arrive. We also discussed the impact that a delivery model change would have on M & E, with again more positives discussed (instant capture of data, regular OS).

6.6 Formulating an Impact Committee

My AR developed further when I received an invite from the S4L CEO to be a member of the newly formed impact committee. The committee’s first action was to discuss an upcoming funding bid that would help S4L greater demonstrate their impact. I offered input into how S4L can attempt to evidence long lasting impact. The impact committee aligned with S4L’s strategic business plan to increase impact management as one of the key pillars of the organisation's foundations. The committee involved four members and agreed to meet monthly.

The first two-team meetings were themed around 'Improving Impact' (Appendix Ten). S4L pride themselves on having a great record of accomplishment of achieving and recording impact, and are proud of the work they have achieved thus far. However, S4L felt that improving their impact would enable them to expand their work and achieve an even greater level of quality in their outcomes (Harlock, 2014). S4L felt that focusing on impact was important because; Improving their impact is a key area of

their three year business plan; S4L are aiming to achieve more *meaningful* impact (where the positive change they create *endures* over time, i.e. sustained outcome); The impact S4L achieve with their beneficiaries is the most important area of the organisation's work; They acknowledge the sector and funders are putting greater scrutiny on charities' impact; An increase in contract and commissioned work in the future means that proving and evidencing their impact is vital.

At the first impact committee meeting, I noticed a lot of the discussion focused on how S4L felt like they need to be better prepared for PBR contracts. There was an agreed understanding that whilst S4L conducted honest and accurate M & E, it was nowhere near the level required for the rigour and demands of PBR contracts (Rees, 2014). I felt that the impact committee was the ideal setting to highlight my proposed AR changes to the SMT. These included 10 Year Plan Workshop Ideas, an LTIT Alumni Group, a greater use of visual impact reports and improvements for contract work.

The impact committee presented what they felt needed to improve to greater collect M & E and evidence the impact of S4L. The following area of improvements were; An evidence of regular M & E work as opposed to M & E only conducted when necessary; A greater quality in collecting hard outcomes (job letters, college inductions etc.); A greater pride in collecting M & E to prove impact; A greater shift towards S4L staff being mentors, not just delivery providers/coaches. Delivery staff were honest to admit that the "calm after the storm" when a course is finished can be used to 'relax' ahead of the next course; A greater attitude towards M & E data collection, not just paying lip service to it; M & E data collection still very extrinsic and funder driven.

I asked how do S4L currently define M & E as successful? The answer was if it is completed and accurate and used to evidence achieved targets. I found it interesting that M & E is identified for extrinsic reasons (evidence of targets achieved/meeting funder's demands) as opposed to learning from the M & E data (Harlock, 2014).

The impact committee was the ideal location for myself to identify what improvements to M & E, and in particular evidencing impact, that S4L were trying to achieve. This strategic thinking could be inputted directly into the research at a suitable pace (Kemmis *et al*, 2013). It was also an opportunity for myself to offer feedback to the committee on any emerging findings. It was noticeable that the committee was very "top heavy", in that the majority of the committee (bar myself) were members of the S4L SMT and were all "Suits". Having a tracksuit present may have added another dimension to the discussions, offering a more practical perspective on some of the ideas discussed (Kay, 2012).

6.7 Investigate a Strategy for Long Term Impact Tracking

I began to focus on Long Term Impact Tracking (LTIT) when I noticed a distinct lack of alumni at the S4L 10th year anniversary meal. I started to question why and how S4L currently keep in touch with the YP that they work with. I questioned if it important or not for S4L to keep in touch, or is just the sector and culture they work in that YP will quite often simply come and go. I looked into other providers who prided themselves on well-publicised alumni groups, who featured case studies that evidenced long-term change (Street League Website, 2018). I felt that a lot could be

gained by S4L improving their LTIT, with ex-participants who have been successful visiting currents TEENS/NEETS to share their stories. Equally S4L could greater understand from YP who had not been successful. What did the S4L programme *not* do for them? How S4L could improve their youth services and achieve greater outcomes?

The current alumni or LTIT system involves the YP tracked through one to one's with the deliverers. It is very dependent on the staff keeping a relationship going, and the current delivery model is too reliant on the relationship remaining positive from the deliverer to the YP and vice versa. I discussed this at great length with the S4L SMT, using the analogy “Who remembers last year’s X Factor winners?” (Field Notes). What I meant by this was that the GF4E deliverers were so busy recruiting for their next programme at the end of delivery completion that past participants, I felt, became an afterthought. A senior member of the SMT supported my views and could see the benefits for evidencing to funders the long-term impact, something that S4L were currently missing.

I wanted to gather some opinions from current and ex-GF4E S4L participants on how they felt that S4L could best keep in touch with them over a longer period. I consulted with the S4L delivery team who issued me a long list of mobile numbers of suitable YP I could contact for a planned focus group. I began to realise how difficult it was to make contact with S4L YP. I attempted to call over thirty different mobile numbers and landlines. I reached countless voice mails, messages saying that this phone was no longer in service, or the phone would just simply ring out unanswered. I spent three frustratingly long afternoons attempting to reach YP who could attend the focus group.

Incentives for attendance, in the form of pizza, soft drinks and bus passes were offered. I was disappointed that out of a confirmed nine YP only three of them actually turned up. It was also not a true reflection of a typical S4L NEET, certainly not, from what I had witnessed on programme. The three YP were all on the “more employable” end of the NEET scale, with Shania an aspiring business professional, who uses LinkedIn and wanted “Networking” events to keep in touch. Shania, whilst technically a NEET (She was about to start a voluntary placement after completing university), was very advanced compared to the majority of the YP who S4L usually work with.

The feedback from the focus group was analysed and reported back to the SMT, however it was heavily influenced by the small amount of participants, and more importantly the calibre of participants. The focus group wanted S4L to run more networking events for alumni, and were adamant that a social media group for ex S4L participants could work well. The group discussed at great length long term tracking through the use of social media, with S4L getting in touch with a YP after a period of time (annually was agreed) to find out what employment or training the YP were currently involved with. It was a worthwhile action to get YP to discuss LTIT and preferred contact methods but it felt like a wasted opportunity, which only emphasised how poorly S4L currently engaged with past participants. An assessment of the LTIT strategy is offered in cycle three.

6.8 Evaluation of Cycle Two

It was difficult as a researcher to manage and maintain two very different relationships. I was attempting to consult and discuss strategic ideas with the S4L SMT whilst still

having my “eyes and ears open” on the ground and forming strong working relations with the delivery teams. I started to question how much trust and clarity granted by *all* of the delivery teams. Sure, they were all paying lip service and saying the *right* things when I interviewed them, but when I asked for access to research locations two of the three teams made this difficult. I was involved in my own ‘Foucauldian power struggle’ (Manley, 2012), as I needed to be granted access to secure comparable data.

This cycle felt very much like I was established as an action researcher that was being utilised in a consultancy type approach. When invited to strategic meetings I was expected to offer input from my findings thus far. This evidenced that I was developing a strong relationship with the S4L SMT, who valued my research and the analysis I could offer. I was not “new” to S4L anymore, and whilst I was having access issues with certain delivery teams, my presence around the organisation was becoming normalised. I was working hard to implement some areas of improvement, focusing on my findings and discussions from cycle one. Whilst not everything was going perfect (completely understandable in an AR setting), I was pleased with my progress and how my ideas were formulating. I had visions of leaving specific initiatives (10YP, LTIT, Mentoring Model Delivery) that would leave a long lasting impact at S4L.

The formulation of the impact committee was a prime example of a long lasting legacy that I hoped the Action Research process would achieve. Cycle two built on the exploratory work of cycle one, and was very much a cycle of “getting things done”, with a researcher presence established and mutual objectives ready to explore and complete (Reason & Bradbury, 2001).

7 Study Two Cycle Three

7.1 Action Research Cycle Three Overview: Table Six (January 2018-April 2018)

Cycle three aimed to review what had worked well and identify areas that needed improvement at S4L. A final round of interviews was conducted with questions more purposeful and concise. I wanted to assess how S4L had evolved (or planned to evolve) through the Action Research process. Whilst this chapter focused on evaluating and offering conclusions, as is the case with Action Research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), new data was still being collected and evaluated. The cycle starts with an observation of a third and final GF4E course, and concludes with a discussion on a delivery model change for S4L. Table Six below offers a concise summary of the research.

Table Six: Action Research Cycle Three

Objectives	Participants	Lewin's Model of AR
Observe third GF4E Course	Researcher & S4L Delivery Team	Reconnaissance or fact finding
Assess LTIT Strategy	S4L SMT	Evaluate
Final Interviews and Discussions	S4L SMT & Deliverer	Amended Plan
Further Discussions on Proposed Change of S4L Delivery Model	S4L SMT	Evaluate
Evaluation of Cycle Three	Researcher	Evaluate

Table Six Action Research Cycle Three Overview (January 2018-April 2018)

7.2 Observation of Third GF4E Course

I observed my third (and final) GF4E course, again at the Lighthouse in Witton, with Simon and Ian the delivery team. The fact that Simon and Ian had been very accommodating from the onset was a huge help, and my access as a researcher was welcome and accepted fully. At this point, I had developed a strong working relationship with them both, and I felt welcome to feedback and offer input on the course and M & E in general. The GF4E course was again very low on numbers (approx. 9 YP in regular attendance) and the course featured NEETS who were very contrasting in their job readiness.

Simon opened up to me about the frustrations he was now facing working with NEETS "It's just eat, sleep, NEET, repeat...I want a change!" (Direct Quote, Field Notes). This quip, whilst perhaps a throwaway line at the end of a working day, offered an insight into how draining working with NEETS can be. The culture at S4L was driven towards achieving successful outcomes, and a PBR culture was starting to emerge within the organisation. Success or failure, for someone like Simon, was measured on numerical targets (hard outcomes). Again, as discussed previously in work by Costas Battle (2019), this was not unique to S4L; this was becoming a regular facet of life working with NEETS.

I started to focus on how a proposed delivery model change (a removal of GF4E courses to a more bespoke mentoring service) would affect S4L participants, and influence how S4L would then conduct M & E and evidence successful outcomes. I had begun to witness that deliverers were focusing on recruiting the next cohort of GF4E participants, when they should have been working intensely with their current/ex GF4E NEETS, helping them to secure tangible outcomes. The deliverers (at the end of a GF4E course) have the NEETS enthused, in a good working pattern, with an edited and updated CV and recent interview experience. It was crucial that the deliverers started to work with the NEETS immediately post GF4E, to discuss their completed 10 YP and make change happen. I now had a raft of proposed Action Research ideas (Appendix Eleven), but the difficulty I faced was making these ideas become a reality.

S4L claim to work with the “furthest away from the job sector” in Birmingham, yet staff and the charity are defined as successful (or not) by numbers. Whilst I am not arguing

the claims that S4L work with YP who are far away from the job market (long term unemployed, behavioural issues, teenage parents), I sympathised with the charity and staff who are constantly trying to evidence their impact through quantitative figures alone. Surely the driver for number, in copious amounts (S4l are always pushing to improve their figures), will mean S4L staff are more inclined and driven towards working with “easier targets”. This attitude or shift towards working with YP who can achieve an outcome quicker, in order to please a PBR contract, is discussed in more detail in (7.3.3 Payment by Results Culture).

The final GF4E course that I observed was affected by low attendance and a contrast in attitude and job readiness by the attendees. Simon and Ian had to spend more time on behaviour management (two of the participants were very unruly throughout the course) and compromised all of the usual GF4E curriculum plus the 10YP that I had implemented. The course delivery was excellent, with two NEETS in particular impressing with their ambition to progress. To conclude, the course had a low attendance, with a contrast between behaviours and needs of the NEETS in attendance. The peer-to-peer relationships and bonding that I had witnessed, and had been so crucial on earlier GF4E courses, were non-existent. The course further supported the need to move towards a holistic, mentoring approach.

7.3 Assess LTIT Strategy

I conducted a focus group (Cycle Two- 6.6) to discuss with ex-GF4E participants how S4L can track progress. The results were inconclusive and I wanted to discuss this

further with the S4L delivery team and SMT. I was certain that S4L were missing supporting evidence for long-term change needed for future funding bids. I also wanted S4L to learn from failure, if this was actually the case. I wanted S4L to improve their knowledge on the destination the NEET YP were taking, and identify how relevant the qualifications (Sport Leaders Level 1 and OCR Employability Award) S4L delivered were for NEETS gaining employment.

Unfortunately, I was not successful in achieving my plans for a LTIT strategy to be in place at S4L. Whilst the details of every YP were inputted onto the S4L database for future contact, there was no formalised method for remaining in touch long term. I personally attempted to contact a YP who S4L has managed to help avoid a prison sentence, and only reached their voicemail. I attempted to make contact several times and this was always the case. No system was ever in place (such as a social media group, or calendar invites on an annual period) for LTIT. When I questioned the SMT about this, I was told, “We are at capacity, and we feel that is a major piece of work for a member of staff to complete” (Direct Quote, Field Notes). I was disappointed as I felt strongly that this could have benefited the M & E at S4L. Perhaps this proposal was outside the scope of this AR. The appetite to change was there from S4L, but the reality and time constraints meant that this was not a possibility.

7.4 Final Interviews and Discussions

As I neared completion of my research period at S4L, I wanted to complete a secondary round of interviews, to assess the impact that AR had achieved to date and to stimulate future ideas and discussions. I was particularly keen to provoke discussion

with the S4L SMT on how S4L can improve their M & E collection and how they can greater evidence their impact. I deliberately decided not to interview all staff at S4L for this round of interviews. I focused on four members of staff that I felt would offer the most insightful answers to my questions, allowing for probing, and at times uncomfortable questions. My questions were formulated by reviewing my field notes to this point and by contrasting them against my original research aims and objectives. The semi-structured interview questions are available at Appendix Twelve.

The interviews were conducted with three of the SMT and Simon from the delivery team. The interviews were semi- structured with probing questions and secondary questions asked wherever I felt necessary. The interviews were then coded using the same grounded theory approach as the first set of S4L interviews, with responses being analysed and coded, with three major themes emerging: Improvements to M & E, Staff's Understanding of M & E and finally a Payment by Results Culture. This section will now highlight and discuss some of the key findings:

7.4.1 Improvements to M & E

The first theme presented is on improvements, both present and future, to how S4L conduct and evidence M & E data. It was important for the AR process that I allowed the participants the opportunity to reflect on areas for improvement (Quigley & Kuhne, 1997). During the interview process, I deliberately asked probing questions, which resulted in some candid discussions on area for improvement:

> *So we need to make sure we standardise what we do, but that is a small part of a bigger picture in regards our whole M & E needs looking at, regarding how*

we do monitor it. We need to review our data monthly instead of quarterly as we do now. We need to review it far more regularly than that in order to be able to react more quickly. (S4L SMT)

At this stage of my AR period, I had earned the trust of the participants to speak candidly on how S4L can improve their M & E protocol. One improvement discussed was a more regular approach to reviewing M & E data. S4L currently analyse and review their M & E quarterly, but their proposed new model would shift to a monthly review of M & E data. This would allow S4L the opportunity to learn from their data and to make improvements where necessary over a much shorter period. This system was instigated due to reflections from the research conducted. Further improvements to M & E at S4L were discussed:

If I am being really honest maybe one thing we need to look into and address is that it feels like sometimes the primary aim and what we are using it for is S4L's outcomes, that we are not using it well enough for the YP, to improve the YP and to give them something to build and improve their life. I think S4L can do a bit more work around the action plan and being more productive with making the YP accountable for it and giving them the ownership as well as the staff member. On the whole it is there for us and the YP, and that is the most important thing. (S4L SMT)

This common theme emerged separately from all four of the interviews. There was an acknowledgement from S4L that M & E had culturally been used to evidence to funders that requirements were being met, but it was used very rarely to learn and develop from (Harlock, 2014). M & E was not used to learn what was working well for YP. In

particular the action plan part of the OS was not being accounted for, and this meant both the YP and member of staff were not working on action points at a suitable pace (if at all). From this question it was decided that moving forward, all YP should be issued action points both electronically (email/text) and with a hard copy (a brief version of actions that they can complete before their next meeting). These actions are very simple, for example; YP must register on a leading job recruitment site, edit their CV, and complete a job search: However, they were currently being lost when only added to an OS that was stored on a deliverer's computer. Whilst not a revolutionary change, a greater focus on achieving tangible outcomes was a necessity for S4L staff due to sector demands (Robertson, 2018).

7.4.2 Staff's Understanding of M & E

An area that I wanted to explore was how much staff understand M & E, and the reasons behind completing M & E. This question was asked in the first round of interviews to all staff, with everyone answering very professionally and competently. Through my research, I had begun to notice tension emerge between the suits and tracksuits, especially around M & E completion and the comprehensive detail that was sometimes lacking from submitted M & E (Manley, 2012). I wanted to understand how S4L had made staff fully aware of the importance of collecting M & E, and if they understood why they were collecting data (Alcock, 2010):

> *My honest opinion is that they understand, they understand why, and they can't not as we have explained it to them all that often. DO they appreciate it or value the importance of it? No I think not. On the whole, generally speaking, it is an inconvenience to them. They just don't appreciate the actual value to producing*

good quality, valid data to them and what that brings to the organisation. And I think also being better at that whole gathering and the whole process of M & E would mean it's better for the YP as well, as they would get more out of it. Yes it's more of an effort and the YP probably doesn't want to do it; so my honest answer would be that they do understand it, but they need to treat it with more importance. (S4L SMT)

The second quote below, from a separate source, also discusses the value (or lack of) that deliverers place on M & E:

So we started out and we wanted to make our M & E quality, valid and authentic and all that type of stuff. But to toe that line and to find the balance between making it realistic for our staff and to make it so we are not distracting it away from all the good work that they do. Now, if you look at our grants (funding), then we pretty much don't have to do anything (M & E wise). Sorry let me re-phrase that; you don't have to do much. As long as you complete an OS then that's it. On the other side of the scale we have the YPP (funding) which is bureaucratic, red-tape all the way through and the M & E is excessive. SO there are the two extremes. I think we (S4L) need to find somewhere in the middle. What I fear is, going back to your previous question a little bit, is that staff will never get to the level we need them to be at, because they don't value it enough. (S4L SMT)

These statements, both from the “suits”, offer a supporting view from study one, that M & E is simply not valued and is seen as bureaucratic for tracksuits to complete (Mackintosh, Harris & Adams, 2014). The tensions, and the relationship of power

(Foucault, 1982), were paramount throughout these interviews, with the suits critical of the tracksuits 'desire' to complete M & E.

It felt like S4L needed a paradigm shift, with M & E not viewed to tick a box for a funder, but an important learning exercise to help both YP and deliverers assess their targets and performances (Alcock, 2010). However, the quote below identifies that newer members of staff are more receptive to M & E.

> *I think I have noticed that as our M & E systems have changed that the newer staff take to the system a bit better. They don't know what the old M & E systems were like, the new way is the only way they know. Whereas I think if you had experienced the older and more relaxed M & E style it can become a bit of a culture shock (S4L SMT)*

This area of discussion (newer staff vs older staff perception of M & E completion) was discussed at the onset of the study. I had never approached AR from this angle, neither had I particularly noticed a difference in attitude towards M & E from staff depending on their length of employment at S4L. This viewpoint, of newer (into the sector) staff acceptance of M & E and greater understanding of the data required is mentioned in the interviews in study one. It is beyond the remit of this thesis to attempt to differentiate the intrinsic attitude towards M & E from staff dependent on their time spent in the sector; but perhaps 'older' tracksuits are used to a way of working that involved less formalised data collection. This could be a future area of research to arise from this thesis.

7.4.3 Payment by Results Culture

S4L are dependent on grants and charitable sources of income to operate. S4L had also started to diversify their income through contracted work through the European Union. This contracted work is known as (PBR) Payment by Results. S4L would receive funding if they evidenced that a NEET had turned EET through their support. The M & E for contract work was significantly more time consuming than typical S4L M & E (Rees, 2014). I wanted to understand how S4L could continue to help Birmingham's most disadvantaged young people, under a PBR culture that encouraged payment through successful EET outcomes.

> *It's a choice S4L are making, we don't have to make that choice, but with an eye on our long term sustainability we believe this is the right thing to do. But in terms of our employability there is a lot of funding out there for PBR. We don't have to chase PBR but we would probably have to shrink if we did not use PBR funding as our grants (funding) is going to dry up because of our successful track record securing funding from comic relief etc. We are already in continuation funding so we would need to change something if PBR was not in use.* (S4L SMT)

Whilst aware that S4L needed to diversify their income and investigating new forms of funding, I wanted to find out if this would change the primary clientele group that S4L operate for:

> *What I reject, so I see what you are trying to ask, that we may sell our soul a little bit, absolutely not, We may have to work with them people (job ready YP) more. Will we consciously target them, maybe we will a little bit more, but we won't not target our hard to reach as that is effectively why we exist.* (S4L SMT)

This question was a very hard question to ask, and provided the most passionate replies; particularly from the S4L SMT. There was an admission that they would subconsciously target NEETs who were “job ready” (Sweenie, 2009). Nevertheless, they were adamant that this would not affect their work with Birmingham’s most disadvantaged YP.

Research in a very similar setting by Costas Battle *et al* (2018, p.56) revealed it was not just S4L who struggle with a PBR culture:

> *The whole sort of, they call it the ‘bums on seats approach’, whereby lots of funders, big funders, will fund just through people come through the door. How many people have you had come through the door in the last six months? Oh, 100? Well, get it up to 120 in 3 months’ time, brilliant. 120? Done. Have your money. But that doesn’t make a great deal of sense when we are talking about sport for development. It is actually more difficult to develop people the more people you have on your programme.*

As commissioning replaces direct state funding, third-sector organisations become more vulnerable, compelled by market priorities which conflict with their social priorities (Clayton *et al*., 2015). Therefore, whilst S4L may want to *always* work with Birmingham’s most disadvantaged, they may have to adapt their beliefs and mission statement, in order to appease funders (Carmel & Harlock, 2008).

7.5 Further Discussions on Proposed Change of S4L Delivery Model

One of my final research meetings discussed how the new planned S4L delivery model would change. After completing an internal review and speaking to several members of staff about the process, S4L SMT decided they would now implement a new delivery model. This delivery model would mean there would be significantly fewer GF4E courses, with mentoring now becoming the preferred option for NEETs. This decision was based on the AR feedback (especially around the differences in job readiness between certain NEETS) and additionally how S4L noticed they were securing a larger amount of successful outcomes through their PBR work (which included job coaches conducting one to one's with YP) then they were through GF4E courses.

According to the S4L SMT a transition to a mentoring approach would make M & E easier to complete. Each YP would be entered onto a mentor's caseload, with each individual meeting recorded, with action points (and completion dates) set and agreed. Outcome Stars would still be completed and used for numerical progress. How this transition will affect the NEETs who sign up for the support from S4L is hard to predict. As a researcher, I witnessed first-hand how important the peer-to-peer support was for encouraging NEETs to return and complete a GF4E course.

The transition away from "rolling" employment courses to a more fixed mentoring approach meant that exit routes could be clearly and more importantly from a funding perspective, quickly identified and worked upon (Walker & Hills, 2016). This approach was supported by research into the sport for employability sector by Walker and Hills (2016, p81):

> *To overcome the challenge of translating attitudes into enduring outcomes, program administrators identified that establishing exit routes for program participants was a critical and necessary aspect of the overall program delivery. Exit routes would entail placing participants with partner organizations or providing internal employment through the bank partner or soccer club. However, obtaining the necessary resources to deliver high-quality exit routes was identified as a barrier. Whereas similar programs have staff responsible for exit routes and employment planning, this particular program was not adequately resourced in this area. This means that when a cohort ended, the staff were immediately focused on recruiting the next cohort rather than working to achieve the enduring (and necessary) outcome of actual employment or intern placement* (Direct Quote, Walker & Hills, 2017, p.81)

Walker and Hills (2017, p.83) identified that the programmes they were evaluating were too focused on what happens on programme, as opposed to what happens pose-programme. This is supported by an employability worker on programme:

> *I know other competitors like Street League have so many designated persons to find them outcomes and I would love that. I guess that is what the job centre is for, but we could have one in our program just specifically for that and I think that could make it better.* (Soccer Club Foundation Education Manager, Walker & Hills, 2017, p.83).

This area of concern is attached to the participants on a S4L GF4E course. There was too much focus on ensuring that participants attended and completed a course, and not enough focus on what they achieved post-course.

7.6 Evaluation of Cycle Three

Cycle three allowed me the opportunity to narrow my focus on what changes were needed at S4L and to implement change. I was ready to deliver on actions, and I felt comfortable leading group sessions and issuing my feedback to the S4L SMT. I felt strongly that the final interviews with the key M & E staff provoked a healthy reflection and allowed S4L the opportunity to assess some of the difficulties they faced. Whilst at times I felt frustrated with a certain lack of access to delivery groups, I was pleased with the impact of the research and the amount of changes that were completed through the Action Research.

In particular, the discussions around PBR, and the need for S4L to be ready to diversify their income whilst staying true to their core beliefs was a detailed and honest exchange. S4L were aware that they still had work to complete with regards both their M & E collection and analysis and use of M & E data, both from the suits and tracksuits. The newly formulated impact committee had regular meetings and actions to complete, leaving a legacy and a focus on impact from Action Research.

The third and final cycle also made me realise that Action Research can be extremely difficult to complete. Acquiring the necessary access, working alongside different members of staff (who all have their own viewpoints on why you are there

researching), and ensuring that I was answerable, trusted and collaborative with both the suits and tracksuits was challenging. Additionally, leading on and designing areas of change or development, especially for such a progressive and well-managed charity was difficult. Whilst in the middle of conducting Action Research, it is very easy to feel, just as McTaggart, Nixon & Kemmis (2017) did in their research, overwhelmed and uncertain on progress. The impact of my changes, especially short-term, did not feel substantial, aside from my contribution to the delivery model change. I am fortunate that I get to see the longer-term impact of the Action Research (Appendix Thirteen).

8 Collective Results

This chapter will now attempt to summarise the research findings from both the nationwide interviews and action research. The original research questions are re-visited and analysed, identifying key findings and presenting the contribution to knowledge. Literature is used to help with the comparison of the results. The original academic contribution to knowledge will be analysed. Additionally the limitations of the research will be discussed.

8.1 Revisit of Research Questions

The thesis attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What perspectives are prevalent across third sector sports organisations with regards to their use and application of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques?

2. How can charities, which use sport as “the hook”, greater evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation?

3. What is the reality of Monitoring and Evaluation for a medium sized sport for development charity in the third sector?

These questions, and the answers that the research has attempted to answer, are discussed in the evaluation of research findings below, and are re-visited in the summary section (11.1). An additional aim of the AR was to ensure that the host charity

improved their ability to greater evidence a social impact. These improvements are presented in section 10.3 (Impact of the Research).

8.2 Evaluation of Research Findings

The findings are drawn from both study one (nationwide qualitative interviews) and study two (action research project). They are in no specific order of relevance, and they highlight and analyse the key discussion points to emerge from the research.

Using Thornberg and Charmaz's (2014) grounded theory technique for data analysis (See 3.9 Data Analysis for Study One), the discussion points below were not pre-conceived; they have emerged and evolved through the data. The software program Nvivo 10 was used as a tool to analyse the transcripts. As suggested by Bryant & Charmaz, (2007), the software application was not the central focus for developing the grounded theory. Rather, the software was merely an aid in the process. Theory development resulted from intimate involvement with the data. A heavy focus and reliance on the software application, for purposes other than maintaining easier access and tracking of large data volumes and cross-referencing could jeopardize the quality of the developed grounded theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Coding of data was undertaken using Nvivo software version 10. Using Nvivo terminology, Nodes (Codes) were identified a posteriori, and in the process, descriptions applied for each newly identified Node. These descriptions laid the initial foundations for detailed memos used in redefining the Nodes as more and more data were coded that underpinned the constant comparison of data and Nodes. This led to Nodes initially created in large numbers as more data were coded. Node changes followed and rationalization as previously coded data were reviewed, Node

relationships were identified, themes extracted and the formation and definition of levels of Nodes that enabled theoretical sampling and, finally, theoretical saturation, leading to theory development (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

While memos provided the framework and glue that enabled the process to evolve, as identified in recognized grounded theory method (Birks & Mills, 2011; Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 1990), there was a heavy reliance on the development of a detailed research log, referred to by some as a research journal (Newbury, 2001). The journal applied more of a reflective component to its development and maintained this through the theory development stage of the research. This approach supported the way chosen to represent the research findings (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001), while also utilising the log to effectively "think-through" the more challenging aspects of qualitative research, and grounded theory more specifically, in areas of constant comparison, theoretical saturation, theoretical sampling, validity, and transparency.

Finally, a more old "fashioned approach" was used to categorise and "lift" themes away from the computer database. Themes were laid out on the office floor and using a cut and paste technique all of the nodes/categories were placed into their relevant groups. This has been identified as a technique called cutting and sorting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and allows the researcher the opportunity to make the data "come alive" and offers further immersion with the data. The key themes that were the most 'persistent features' (Gomm,2008, p. 250) of the participants' responses and that are most pertinent to the particular focus of this article are presented below.

The findings are presented in the first person, to offer the reader the researcher's voice on the results, offering comment from experiences in both interviews, and the action research process, a method utilised by Coghlan (2008).

8.2.1 Funder's Demands

The research adds evidence to the theory that the third sector is reliant, and reactive to funder's demands, as previously identified by Cordery & Sinclair (2013) and Arvidson (2009). The shift towards an outcomes focused sector has resulted in charities constantly having to evidence their impact (Ellis & Gregory, 2008). The issues highlighted via this research support Thomson's (2011) work, primarily around how different, and time-consuming, funder's demands can be. There is not a set formula or consistent protocol for M & E paperwork, and this can be extremely time-consuming for the third sector, especially for smaller charities. Bennett (2016) details that most small charities collapse within the first twelve months of their conception, with a paperwork burden from funders listed as one of the reasons behind their failure. The findings from this thesis support this detail and in agreement with earlier work from Arvidson (2009) and Harlock (2013) identify how time restricting M & E can be.

The power of this thesis to affect change, especially on a matter as complex as funders demands, will be minimal. However, the research clearly highlights that charities, both large and small, can struggle to cope with complex funder demands. If this message can be shared, via a conference presentation or a thesis summary, to charity funders, then this could well be a positive legacy from the research. Funders' demands and expectancy for numerical results through the power of sport are on the increase (Dey & Gibbon, 2017). Funders need to greater understand that they have a pivotal role

working with, not against, charities and offer greater support mechanisms (Hyndman & McConville, 2018).

Witnessed at S4L, especially the PBR work, I did not notice the funder's demands influencing heavily on the ground level (with the delivery team). The senior management team (SMT) would have controlled this. The SMT, whilst acknowledging that the PBR contracts M & E could be strenuous, were of the viewpoint that they wanted to achieve that level (intense) of M & E with all future delivery work, not just the PBR contracts. For instance, the demand from PBR to evidence a job outcome, through the form of a pay-slip or job contract, was replicated for all S4L core employability services. This was not a funder's demand though, but an admission from the SMT that this was good, honest working practice. This an example of what Maher (2016) states as the third sector learning from the corporate world.

The research findings, especially the need for M & E completion to evidence funders, support the findings of Mackintosh *et al* (2014, p.77), who used the work of Foucault to investigate power relationships in M & E;

> *in order to gain a greater understanding of what approaches to M&E are most suitable for Sport Development Practitioners (SDPs) it may be that participatory evaluation research, where SDPs are included within the research process, is needed to empower and involve practitioners to the extent that their voices could be heard alongside those of funding organisations, policy makers and academics.*

Mackintosh *et al* (2014) propose that practitioners (commonly referred to in this study as tracksuits) are utilised within the evaluation process. The findings from this study

support this viewpoint and a need for more reciprocal forms of evaluation are called for.

8.2.2 Importance of Quantitative Results

A similar discussion, linked with funder's demands, is the increasing importance of achieving and evidencing quantitative results within the third sector (Maynard, Street & Hunter, 2011). The shift towards a PBR culture has been heavily criticised (Sheil & Breidenbach-Roe, 2014; Carmel & Harlock, 2008), and the research, especially the Action Research stage, has revealed that charities can, and do, struggle with a PBR culture. S4L, a charity that prides itself on working with Birmingham's most disadvantaged in society, are a prime example of a charity that could be accused of "mission drift" (Bennett & Savani, 2011). It became clear through the AR process that S4L are caught in a difficult period: they want (and still do) work with Birmingham's most deprived job seekers, but when faced with contract work, that operate on a PBR basis, they are forced to focus on outcomes and numerical targets. This emphasises the work of Morris (2016) who is critical of the use of PBR within the third sector, especially for charities working with complex cases.

I noticed during the AR a culture focused on outcomes. This is understandable, as this is how the majority of S4L's work is funded. There has been a change in the funding culture, away from a participation focus (which was traditionally led by Sport England, who were interested in numerical growth), towards a culture that incentives outcomes (Morris, 2016). S4L, as a charity, would not be financially viable, or certainly would have to downsize, if they did not achieve PBR targets. Discussions with charities across the first study revealed that this PBR approach is certainly not just unique to

S4L, the third sector, as a whole has to embrace and work within the constraints for PBR. This could result in charities completely revisiting their charitable aims and intentions (Hyndman, 2017; Aiken & Harris, 2017). Charities will either have to evolve, and embrace PBR, or face an uncertain future (Hyndman, 2017; Cordery, Smith & Berger, 2017).

Morgan & Costas Battle (2019) research in particular is damning of the PBR culture that is entering the third sector. Across a three-year research period, Morgan & Costas Battle (2019, p.2) experienced a charity that:

> *Within a context shaped by a neoliberal agenda, the necessity to meet predetermined participation targets encourages organizations to use the most efficient means possible to maximize numbers of program participants. However, such recruitment strategies often overlook young people whose social exclusion is more complex or acute, and who, arguably, are in greater need of intervention support.*

It is clear from the findings presented from Morgan & Costas Battle (2019) alongside the data from this thesis that charities are experiencing mission drift. It is extremely difficult to complete, and then receive the financial reward, for PBR contracts, when their original or most-needy clientele are the furthest away from the job market (Hyndman, 2017). Kenyon, Mason & Rookwood (2018) work into third sector sporting organisations in Liverpool also identifies how challenging it can be, in the face of quantitative results, for a charity to stay true to their original mission statement.

8.2.3 M & E Paperwork Overload

Similar findings and relatable to the Payment by Results and Funder's Demands sections, a key finding was the overload of M & E, especially for PBR contracts. Paperwork for PBR outcomes was lengthy, time-consuming and was often criticised by the S4L staff team, and the participants in study one. It would benefit the third sector if M & E data collation was electronic, with the use of designated services (such as Client Relationship Management Systems) such as Upshot or Views, in use for quick and transparent M & E uploads. Sport 4 Life now use Upshot for all data collection methods, resulting in a gathering of evidence for funders and for internal analysis.

Documented across both study one and two is that M & E can be tiresome and distracting for deliverers, as opposed to collecting quality data that can inform future practice. M & E will always be required within the third sector, both to evidence outcomes and participation statistics to funders, but additionally to inform future internal policies and strategic planning (Hyndman, 2017; Dey & Gibbon, 2017). However, this research identifies that there must be an implementation of 'smarter' M & E uploading, in order to dispel the traditional viewpoint of M & E as a "burden" for delivery teams to complete (Dey & Gibbon, 2017). The research findings are in unison with Harlock and Metcalf (2016) who summarise the need, and struggle, for the third sector, when it comes to evidencing impact to a wide range of stakeholders.

8.2.4 Suits vs Tracksuits

The research highlights that there must be internal improvements in order to combat a divide formed between two differing sectors of the same organisation. Skinner, Edwards & Corbett (2014) research into sports management suggests that suits

should devote more time listening to, and working alongside tracksuits, as they will then understand greater the challenges that they may face. The AR process substantiates the work of Skinner, Edwards & Corbett (2014), and identifies the need for suits to greater understand the practical work faced by the delivery teams.

It was evident throughout the research the great importance that both parties place on each other. The suits need accurate, regular and informative M & E produced by the tracksuits, in order to evidence that funding outcomes are being achieved (Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Coalter, 2012). The tracksuits need to produce this high standard of M & E in order to evidence to the suits that they are delivering high quality sessions. It could be argued, and this thesis would add substance to this claim, that the suits need the tracksuits "even more", due to their ability to engage with hard to reach groups through sport, and capture M & E data (Coalter & Taylor, 2009).

The relationship between the two parties was strained, especially when the justification for the need of M & E is not discussed, or explained properly to the tracksuits. M & E can become laborious, and only seen as essential for meeting funders requirements (Thomson, 2010). It is apparent across both studies that conflict arises between suits and tracksuits when M & E is dichotomous, and power struggles emerge.

The work of Foucault (1982), and the power struggles that Foucault describes, is used to compare the relationship between suits and tracksuits (Townley, 1993). There is a "power relationship" in place, and there needs to be a more harmonious approach to M & E collection to rectify this (Kelly, Foucault & Habermas, 1994). The tracksuits *must* be more aware about why and who they are collecting the M & E data. There must be a use for the data (for the organisation to learn from, or even the tracksuit themselves), as opposed to simply collecting M & E data only to appease funders. The suits also

must be able to lead on this, and not simply demand, or threaten tracksuits with funding cuts (job losses) if M & E data is not collected.

The research findings fully support the work of Harris and Adams (2016) who suggest that a deeper examination of the evidence dynamics at a practical level are needed. The conflict between suits and tracksuits that was paramount across the research settings would be reduced if, as Harris & Adams (2016) detail, the thought process and explanation for collecting M & E is shared, or even originates from a collaborative discussion between all parties. When reverting back to Foucault's (1982) concept of power the research identifies that, the following dictatorial dynamic still exists:

Funders: Essentially hold *all* of the power as they are in charge of the financial rewards (or reduced payments for poor performances) that charities rely on to exist. Most funders will also initially dictate the funding terms and numerical targets (outputs and/or outcomes) that must be achieved within an agreed period.

Suits: Responsible for ensuring that the funding is distributed accordingly to ensure that targets are achieved. Will also have the responsibility of ensuring that impact and M & E data is shared professionally with funders.

Tracksuits: Responsible for ensuring that the delivery of programmes is achieved and that sessions are well attended and achieve the numerical targets achieved. Also responsible for ensuring that the programme's M & E is completed with the participants and shared with the suits in a timely manner.

Whilst it could be argued that all three of the parties are in equal need of support from each other, when viewed through the power lens of Foucault (1982), the research identifies that a dictatorial, top-heavy power relation emerges. Whilst it is beyond the

scope of this research alone to present a solution to the difficulties that suits and tracksuits face, the following recommendations are offered to the third sector:

A greater understanding is needed of each other's roles, with regular site visits and interaction (where possible) for suits with their beneficiaries. This will evidence how difficult it can be for tracksuits to collate substantial M & E data (Dey & Gibbon, 2017).

Further explanation is required to tracksuits on how M & E is not just required for meeting funder's requirements (Arvidson, 2009). Lastly, regular meetings between the two parties should be agreed to discuss difficulties or to issue feedback on M & E systems and policies.

After reviewing the comments from study one, and witnessing first-hand the power struggle during the Action Research process, I strongly feel that by following the three steps listed above, charities will see fewer power struggles, and greater cohesion.

8.2.5 Review of Cyclical Delivery Model

An important (and unexpected) finding was the failure of the existing S4L delivery model, the cyclical delivery model, to achieve outcomes and long-term support for participants. Staff were overly reliant on course delivery, and had lost focus on participants who were, after receiving an intervention and boosted their employability skills, in the greatest need for mentoring support (Walker, Hills & Heere, 2017). Staff were perceiving success by the number of participants who were attending a Get Fit for Employment Course.

Whilst this thesis does not dispute the skills and experiences that a GF4E course could achieve, similarly to research by Walker, Hills and Heere (2017), the post course support for the transition into the workplace was minimal. Staff were already concerning themselves with recruitment for the next GF4E course. The use of M & E data revealed that it was apparent that S4L were not offering the full employability support that their beneficiaries required (Yates & Payne, 2006). Appendix Thirteen discusses how this has now changed at S4L, with the cyclical delivery model now amended to greater suit the young people's needs. This is an example of a direct improvement to service that resulted through the collaborative action research approach.

8.2.6 Contrast of Findings- Study One vs Study Two

The Action Research process involved in study two allowed the opportunity to investigate, over a large period of time, how relevant the findings of study one were for the voluntary sector. The remaining three key themes that were under discussion in study one are re-visited (funders demands has already been covered in 8.2.1), with the focus on their impact in study two.

8.2.7 Evidencing a Social Impact

This was certainly prevalent across study two, with S4L attempting to evidence their social impact across a variety of platforms. This included impact reports, newsletters, twitter posts, conference presentations and collaborative meetings with corporate partners and funding agencies.

Being able to evidence their social impact meant that S4L were seen as a legitimate and credible charity by funding agencies; Able to present how they would achieve specific targets (using their evidence based to validate funding claims); Able to network with local referral partners, evidencing that they could achieve success and be accountable for designated targets, and constantly pushing to exceed their targets.

Evidencing a social impact was attributed to the marketing department. However, without the M & E collected and collated, it would be impossible to evidence their impact (Arvidson, 2009). The research revealed that M & E, and being able to evidence an impact, is vital for a charity's marketing department (in a small to medium organisation it is not uncommon for this to be the same person conducting both of these roles). Funders, especially prospective funders, are more likely to invest in a charity that can evidence their work through a combination of numerical data, case studies and proven impact (Harlock & Metcalf, 2016). An argument could be that the collection of M & E data is mostly used by the marketing department, as opposed to being used as a form of analysis of what worked well for whom (Coalter, 2009). To summarise, both studies have revealed that it is extremely important that charities evidence their social impact through a multitude of platforms, in order to appease and attract funders, and to grow as an organisation (Harlock, 2013; 2014)

8.2.8 Expectancy versus the Reality of M & E Collection

The reality of M & E collection was, at times, as difficult as everyone in Study One explained. The participants did not want to be filling in forms or issuing addresses, they wanted to get involved in the sport sessions. An important part of the research

process was to witness first-hand how time consuming and complex collecting M & E data can be (Harlock, 2014).

I noticed that an organised M & E collection system, with the use of an assistant and a register, increases the efficiency of M & E collection. Especially when combined with a proficient Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) system that allows electronic uploading of registers and clientele data. The M & E of sports sessions can be complicated, with new participants attending or participants attending partway through a session, but with a detailed and organised system, I witnessed some excellent M & E input.

The difficulties that S4L faced was the data that they needed to collect for the PBR contracts. The form filling was extensive and the evidential paperwork, a funders requirement for when an outcome had been secured, was difficult to capture. This was specific M & E that was attached to PBR contracts though, and not relevant for all of S4L's activities and qualifications. Generally, the collection of M & E data at S4L was an organised process. The participants were aware that in order to attend free courses and receive bursaries they needed to complete paperwork. S4L did not demand detailed M & E, unless they were completing paperwork for a PBR contract. In summary, my findings reveal that the expectancy of collecting M & E can differ from the reality. At sport sessions, even the most basic requirements, such as a date of birth or full name, can be difficult to capture (Coalter, 2007).

8.2.9 Social Return on Investment

This area, the demand for sharing your Social Return on Investment (SROI), actually diminished throughout the study. At the onset of the study, in 2016, an abundance of charities were highlighting their SROI, identifying it as a particularly attractive method for recruiting funders and beneficiaries. With its monetary value, easy to display formula, and claim of a large return on investment, the SROI was an extremely popular method for attracting funders (Harlock, 2013).

Critics of the SROI approach highlighted that monetary claims were often substantiated without a correct method and were deliberately over-populated to attract funders attentions (Arvidson *et al*, 2013). Whether this criticism was discussed by charity trustees and deliberately omitted from impact reports I am unsure of, but as the research progressed, I noticed fewer SROI claims. S4L navigated away from using an SROI claim on their latest impact report, as they did not feel that they could really justify the quantities presented. Across the sector, analysing other impact reports, would suggest this is also the case. Evidencing your impact through a financial SROI claim was prevalent at the onset of this study (2015/16), but would now appear to seem a very dated method in 2019.

It is hard to predict if the third sector will continue to use SROI claims. Recent research from Mashiter (2019) and Davies, Taylor & Ramchandani (2019) states that there is still a place for SROI within the third sector, but only when evidenced properly and factually transparent with a robust methodology.

8.3 Contribution to Knowledge

An action research thesis is unique, with the researcher constantly having to adapt and reflect (Stringer, 2013). There is no hypothesis to test, or measurements to

explore and discuss. The contribution to knowledge must be both theoretical, and practical. Zuber-Skerrit and Fletcher (2007, *p.419*) identify that:

> *An AR thesis is required to contribute to knowledge in both theory and practice. Knowledge in practice relates to practitioners' improvement and transformation of their workplace practices into ones that are new, unique and different from past practices in the particular system.*

Action researchers often experience a complicated research process, not only when conducting their research, but also when trying to report their processes and findings (Robertson, 2000). As Cook (2009) found, conducting action research is not a tidy process. Displaying the practical contribution to knowledge within Action Research can be just as "messy" as collating the data (Coghlan, 2011). What one person may identify as a major action research finding may appear very irrelevant to someone else (Kemmis, 2009). The goal setting and validity criteria of Anderson & Harr (2005) is re-visited below to help the reader identify and assess the contribution to practical knowledge that this thesis has produced:

8.3.1 Anderson and Herr's Goals of Action Research and Validity Criteria (2005)

Goals of Action Research	Quality/Validity Criteria
The generation of new knowledge	Dialogic and process validity
The achievement of action-orientated outcomes	Outcome validity
The education of both the researcher and the participants	Catalytic validity
Results that are relevant to the local setting	Democratic validity
A sound and appropriate research methodology	Process validity

8.3.2 The Generation of New Knowledge

The recent work of Harris (2018) and Costas Batlle, Carr & Brown (2018) has supplemented the work of Coalter (2007, 2013) by questioning the social impact of sport and the use of monitoring and evaluation techniques for evidencing this claimed social impact.

This thesis has sought to explore and explain how third sector organisations, who claim to utilise the power of sport for social good, can evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques (Arvidson & Lyon, 2014). Using a qualitative approach, and speaking to industry professionals, this research presents insight into how the third sector can struggle evidencing the impact it can achieve through sport (Spaaijj, 2009; Kay, 2009). Furthermore, an intensive action research period of data collection, allowed the researcher to investigate and analyse the M & E process, both from a delivery and non-delivery perspective (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Whilst other researchers have used action research, or an ethnographic approach (Kenyon, Mason & Rookwood, 2018; Lewis, 2012) for investigating the third sector's struggles and PBR issues, this thesis was granted access to affect major, and at times minor, changes within an organisation. Having access to the influence of the senior management team, whilst also establishing a relationship and experiencing the realities of work at the "coalface", resulted in a thesis that can be used to influence policy makers, funders and third sector organisations with their future decision-making (Biscomb, Medcalf & Griggs, 2016).

This thesis uses the earlier work of Coalter (2007, 2010, 2013) to further question the rhetoric of the sport –for-development movement, and to analyse what sport achieves for who, where and how. Whilst later work from Coalter focuses on international sport-for-development projects (2013), this thesis primarily focused and adds knowledge to the UK based charity sector, with the extensive Action Research conducted in the Midlands. Coalter (2010) discusses "mission drift" within the charity sector, and over-ambitious aims for the use of sport. This research affirms Coalter's (2010) findings, that mission drift can be a problem for sporting organisations, and that the use of sport to achieve employability can be misleading. It was identified that S4L, and all of the charities interviewed in Study One, use a "Sport-Plus" model to achieve their organisational goals, where sport is the vehicle or incentive to recruit participants, who then attend employability workshops or mock interviews (Coalter, 2015).

This thesis reacts to Coalter's (2015, *p. 22*) demand for "A need for scepticism" when investigating sport's mythical claims. It was important that probing, and at times, difficult questions were asked to third sector organisations, to directly relate the impact of their programmes intentions, and links to sport, to their achieved outcomes (Harlock, 2014). The research identifies, and adds context to the theory, that for most sport-based interventions, sport is merely the hook used to recruit participants (Green, 2009; Hartmann, 2003). This thesis adds evidence to the concept that very little is achieved by sport directly, but success can be achieved through a sport plus model (Levermore, 2008 & 2011; Haudenhuyse, Theeboom & Coalter, 2012).

This research adds a contribution to demands set by Coalter (2017, p.77):

> *We need to understand the processes of participation—the nature of participants' experience and the programme mechanisms which explain any*

measured changes in values, attitudes or behaviour. This refers to the need to 'de-centre' (Crabbe, 2000) (or 'de-mythologise') sport to understand what sports, work for what subjects, in what conditions and why?

Concerning charities such as S4L, and other organisations interviewed in study one, the theoretical implications from the thesis pinpoint that sport alone will not achieve their desired outcomes (Skinner *et al*, 2008). This thesis highlights that sport can be a powerful hook, to reach disadvantaged people (Green, 2009; Hartmann, 2003). The "mystical" power of sport (Crabbe, 2009) is evidenced via ability to recruit, and then upskill, young people through a variety of different employability programmes (Spaaij, Magee & Jeanes, 2013).

This research, as well as identifying and discussing the power of sport for social change, has cast original knowledge on the issues that the third sector faces with mission drift, an onset of a payment by results culture and difficulty evidencing asocial impact to funders (Arvidson & Lyon, 2014).

8.3.3 The Achievement of Action-Orientated Outcomes

The achievement of action-orientated outcomes and the longer-term sustainability of those outcomes are discussed in detail in section 10.3. This section requires reflexivity and honesty when assessing the impact, or achievement of outcomes (Kember, 2002). Jacobson (1998) states that quality action research can display integrity, and the action research outcomes, when analysed, are formed through a period of cyclical research.

The difficulty assessing the outcomes at S4L originate from the lack of defined targets from the onset. Whilst discussions and observations took place, it was never clearly

defined, what S4L wanted to achieve when the research started. Outcomes emerged from the researcher's data (both visual and qualitative) collected in cycle one. This was a deliberate strategy to let the data emerge and identify strategic action points; however, this did add complexities, and "messiness" (Cook, 1998). These were then presented and debated with the S4L senior management team after the completion of cycle one.

These included: The formulation of an impact committee; A greater understanding of the realities of M & E data capturing on programmes; A longer-term approach to the use of M & E to evidence impact (Long Term Impact Tracking); A greater synergy between deliverers and non-deliverers; A greater understanding for delivery staff on why M & E data is collected and an adaptation of a new delivery model for NEETS

All of the areas listed above were improved and benefited from the Action Research process. Whilst the depth of impact can be questioned, and the researcher did not complete their aims for the Longer Term Impact Tracking, the agreed outcomes were all completed. It is difficult to measure the overall strategic impact of some of the actions, especially something as individualistic as synergy. However, I am confident that all of the actions were completed, discussed, and brought to the attention of all S4L staff.

8.3.4 The Education of both the Researcher and the Participants

Using reflexivity, and by re-visiting my field notes, it is apparent that I experienced a great personal growth by participating in an Action Research study. The opportunity

to improve my professional conduct and to gain experience working and managing within the third sector, has resulted in improvements. Action Research ensures that the practitioner involved will always be striving to improve their academic and professional standards (Stringer, 2008). The ability to debate and discuss improvements for strategic change at S4L has resulted in increased confidence. Action Research encourages collaborative decision-making, allowing me the opportunity to improve my approach to group work and strategic planning (Bruce & Easley, 2000). Upon starting the research as a relative novice towards both academia and the third sector, I feel that I have made a great personal improvement across both.

The S4L participants were educated by completing Action Research. This was an opportunity for them to reflect, evaluate and openly discuss their viewpoints and knowledge base on M & E and evidencing impact with a non-judgemental person. The workplace, especially within the time and financial constraints that the third sector is under, can be a chaotic environment, with sparse opportunities to reflect and consider improvements to your services. This research, and the probing questions and analysis that evolved from the research, meant that S4L staff were working collaboratively to achieve improvements.

Each member of the S4L staff team was interviewed at the onset of the study, with open-ended questions utilised to encourage discussion and personal consideration. Every person involved within the study at S4L will have improved his or her knowledge base on the following key items:

- Why Monitoring and Evaluation is important to the third sector
- How to greater evidence a social impact
- The demand for accurate M & E data for both deliverers and non-deliverers

- The importance of longer term tracking of outcomes
- How they collect M & E and why

This is only a summary of the key learning points that individuals would have developed by being involved in the action research study.

8.3.5 Results that are Relevant to the Local Setting

The results were relevant to both a local and nationwide setting, and offer insights to the wider third sector. The research recognised commonalities with the nationwide interviews, especially that collecting M & E as an exercise purely for funders, as opposed to a learning culture or for organic organisational growth (Harlock, 2013). There was also further discussion on the overload of M & E paperwork for funder's requirements (especially with payment by results contracts).

The research identified that there were moments of tension between delivers and non-deliverers, and areas of improvement were established as an organisation to improve these deficits. Each party resolved to gain a greater understanding on how important (and why) M & E collection was for their respective job roles.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, the organisation used Action Research as an opportunity to identify areas of strengths and weakness for their current cyclical delivery system. Flaws highlighted with the current system resulted in the implementation of a new delivery model. This major strategic change resulted through the use of Action Research.

8.3.6 A Sound and Appropriate Methodology

The required methodological rigour for an Action Research process was achieved through this thesis, with the data collection techniques advised by Winter (2003) completed in full. Winter (2003) insists that data must be detailed, collaborative, documented, observed and achieved through a triangulation of different sources.

Gummeson's (2000) (see 3.6.1.) ten characteristics of quality Action Research was referred to throughout the research process. Whilst an Action Research study can be difficult at times (with constant avenues of evolving research, reflection and re-visiting of research questions, all being conducted with collaborative partners), the methodological demands that Gummeson (2010) stipulates were used as a constant checklist.

Whilst a lack of space does not allow the opportunity to discuss all ten points, and how they were adhered to throughout the research, it is worth discussing two of the key points. The Action Research was interactive and conducted in real time, with the three action research cycles identifying changes, challenges and actions that were faced throughout the research (Gummeson, 2000).

8.4 Limitations of the Research

Every study will have a certain amount of limitations, and it is an important part of the research process to identify and be aware of them (Rutherford *et al*, 2014). This section will discuss the limitations, and what impact they may have had on the study and research findings.

8.4.1 Small Sample Size in Study One

I will begin by discussing the relevant sample size of study one (n5). Whilst supporters of qualitative studies will state that the quality, not quantity that counts, I feel that a larger sample size may have resulted in a richer set of data, allowing for greater comparisons of viewpoints. I originally intended to interview at least two more participants, but due to the unavailability of the intended, this was not a possibility.

I originally debated completing a baseline survey, utilising a larger sample of charities, through a questionnaire or online survey approach. This would have allowed a greater set of quantifiable results that could have shaped the research moving forwards. However, whilst I am admitting that the small sample size could be a limitation, I certainly do still feel that the quality, and the criteria that the participants all met, resulted in a rich and insightful set of discussions that flagged up key areas of focus for the Action Research stage.

Additionally, the fact that I had formed no relationship with the participants in study one, except for some introductory and confirmation emails, there were points in the interviews where I felt that the participants were guarded with their answers. I am unsure on how I could have combatted this, as time constraints meant that I was not able (or allowed) to spend more than a couple of hours with each participant. Whilst I attempted to use my interview skills and techniques to form a rapport, certainly for at least two of the interviews I felt like I received the “perfect” answers. Again, I do not feel that this dis-credits the quality of study one, but it is worthwhile to reflect on.

8.4.2 An Over-Reliance on the "Key Players" in the Action Research Process

The Action Research process at S4L was not without its difficulties, with the lack of engagement from the delivery teams being a major issue that I faced. I was hoping to witness a multitude of delivery teams in action, delivering on the core S4L curriculum; however, this was not a possibility. Due to issues discussed earlier in the thesis, I was over-reliant on observing the delivery team of Simon and Ian. Whilst again, I do not feel that this this had a negative impact on the data collection, it would have been beneficial to form closer working relationships, and to gain access to, other S4L delivery teams.

I had very little (none even, with one of the delivery teams) interaction and shadowing with certain delivery teams. Whilst every S4L staff member consented to an interview, it was frustrating that I could not witness and discuss "live" M & E collection with *all* of the S4L delivery teams. I am not sure how I would change my approach if I could complete the research again. I had to be able to discuss strategic change with the S4L SMT, but perhaps this meant that I was then seen as a "spy" or untrustworthy by certain delivery teams.

8.4.3 A Stronger Focus on the Action Research Outcomes from the Onset

Whilst I always intended the Action Research process to identify key areas of improvements through interviews and data collection, I regret not having a clearer, mutually agreed brief from the onset. Action Research was a new approach for S4L, and myself, and I feel that on reflection, my inexperience resulted in a lack of focused outcomes at the onset. I left my initial discussions with the S4L SMT with ideas and

areas of focus, but no clear and defined outcomes, or strategic Action Research changes.

Whilst cycle one was always intended to be an explorative stage of research, perhaps, in hindsight, a pre cycle one stage could have been conducted. I had completed site visits and met key members of staff at S4L, but only with an introductory angle, never through an Action Research discussion. A focus group approach, similar to the one conducted after I was established as a research presence at S4L, might have offered a clearer perspective on the key achievable changes through Action Research at S4L.

During the Action Research process, and especially when I was involved in the "messy" period, I found it difficult at times to identify areas of change, and I started to doubt the importance of my research and the impact of my research (Cook, 2009). Whilst I enjoyed and gained a lot through the exploratory nature of the research, a more defined and structured introductory period would have been beneficial.

8.5 Summary of the Collective Results Chapter

In this chapter I presented the collective results from both study one (nationwide qualitative interviews) and study two (action research project). The aim of the chapter was to highlight and analyse the key points of discussion and importance that emerged from the research. The chapter concludes with a review of the limitations of the research.

Utilising the method of Coghlan (2008) the findings are presented using a first person narrative, allowing the opportunity for comment from my own research notes and experiences to reflect on the data. The thesis will now present the reflections chapter.

9 Reflections

9.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will be a reflection on the research conducted within the thesis, using a personal narrative. This chapter will grant me the opportunity to speak candidly about the impact of the research and any difficulties that I faced (McIntyre, 2007). Robertson (2000) states that being reflective is a key part of the Action Research procedure. Future ambitions for the research are discussed. The chapter will then conclude with a reflection on how completing an Action Research thesis has influenced myself.

9.2 Ambitions for the Research

I am ambitious for the research to be utilised by the third sector, ideally across two strands. I would like funders presented with a discussion on my findings, and made more aware on how the demands for M & E can be an issue for the third sector. The opportunity to discuss evidencing a social impact, and strategies for making this clearer, to third sector organisations, would be a future aim for the research. I do not

want this thesis to “collect dust”, I want the discussion points shared and debated by funders and the third sector. I would like more third sector organisations to embrace action research, and the critical thinking and improvements that it can produce. Elements of this research were well received at the Voluntary Sector Conference at Liverpool Hope University, where I discussed the difficulties that charities can experience when dealing with the onset of PBR contracts.

Additionally, I hope this thesis can be used to support third sector organisations discuss how they can greater evidence their social impact. I would like to publish excerpts of this thesis in relevant academic journals, primarily focusing on journals that have a wide reach to the third sector. It would be a great honour for academics to reference from this piece of work, or for future research to originate from the recommended suggestions for future research.

9.3 Completing Action Research

According to McIntosh (2010), Action Research should be reflective throughout, with the researcher constantly reflecting on their role and the quality of data collected, and the participants reflecting on their own input. The use of an online diary to store field notes and reflective memo’s was crucial to aid my own reflective process. I identified with the fieldwork of Winter (2003) and Burgess (1981) who stress, “no field note is a wasted field note”. I was constantly inputting notes, questions, observations, remarks, and future ideas. These were for my reflective chapter (these notes were used heavily when discussing data and emergent themes earlier in the thesis).

9.3.1 Establishing an Identity as a Researcher

On reflection, I feel that one of the most difficult aspects of the research was to establish an identity as a researcher. As discussed in my Action Research section, the fact that I was “parachuted” into S4L as a PhD student meant that for the majority of the staff labelled me immediately as an expert. I instantly felt the pressure to act and perform as an ‘expert’. It took some time (at least the first few weeks of AR) for me to relax and start to be myself around staff. After what could be considered an induction period, I began to establish my identity at S4L. I was deliberately honest and helpful with everyone in the office and on site locations. I never made notes in front of anyone, or talked into a Dictaphone, as I did not want any of the S4L staff or course participants to feel “under review”. I offered my assistance where possible and started to ask questions, both formally and informally.

9.3.2 Achieving Balance: A Researcher or a Spy in the Camp

One of the most difficult aspects I faced was finding a positional balance as a researcher, across two very different organisational camps (suits and tracksuits). On reflection, it was always going to be a strenuous task to establish a relationship with both of the very different groups. For the suits, my research intended to be critical, meaningful and grounded in reality. I was there to inform internal policies, suggest areas of improvement and to be analytical throughout.

With the tracksuits, I had to establish quickly a working relationship, and a trust that I was there with the best intentions. I had to evidence that I was not there as a “spy”

from the senior management team. Similar trust issues discussed in other action research studies, with Edwards Groves, Grootenboer and Ronnerman (2016) highlighting how difficult it was for them to establish a working relationship with teachers in an AR study.

My difficulties with the senior management team situated around the power of investigation, and the nature of AR inquiry they wanted to impose. At times, questions posed to me were not about impact, but focused on an individual nature:

> *I was called into an impromptu meeting today with a member of the SMT. This was not out of the ordinary but I was surprised by the nature of the questioning. After some initial chit-chat, the manager in question began to ask direct questions around a member of staff's work ethic and timekeeping. I was being asked if I had seen any negative traits or habits developing. I felt very uncomfortable with the line of enquiry. I paused for thought but then very calmly answered that this was not suitable for me to comment on. We continued with some more discussion on a separate subject. I was disappointed that I had been even asked these investigative and personal questions. I felt that the focus from my actual intentions for action research were being lost somewhat.*

(Field Note, 2018)

Thankfully, this probing and individualistic approach did not continue. The nature of my research, that involved large periods of shadowing staff in their work environment, asking questions and analysing impact, meant that certain members of the delivery team viewed me as a "nuisance". On reflection, I am still unsure on how I could have resolved this. My research methods would have remained the same, and I invested a

considerable period attempting to form a relationship with members of the S4L delivery team. However, the fact that I was there to investigate, question and probe, meant that my presence was simply not welcomed by certain staff. I feel that the direct quote from McNiff (2005, p.13) highlights that perhaps I, or the S4L SMT, had not explained the benefits of Action Research properly:

> *In action research approaches there is a genuine sense of partnership, where practitioner and supporter recognise that there might be a difference in responsibilities and professional expertise, but no difference in value. They are equal as practitioners. Both are there to improve their work by acting as challenging and supportively critical colleagues, each for the other. This is a creative dialogue of equals in which both are trying to find the best way forward for themselves and each other.* (McNiff, 1995, p.21)

At times at S4L, I did not feel equal in value, nor did I feel that certain staff members were there to improve their work through the Action Research Process. The balance that I found hard to achieve was being thought of as a researcher, as opposed to a spy. The fact that I fed my research back to the S4L SMT did mean that the research was very top-heavy. I could argue that it had to be this way (as the suits informed the policy and strategic decision making), but the fact that I observed, reflected, analysed and then consulted with the SMT, perhaps meant that I was viewed sceptically by the delivery team. This definitely affected my access (or lack of, for some of the delivery team).

For future Action Research studies, I would recommend that researchers consider how they are viewed by the major influencers in a study. Whilst no two AR studies are the

same, and not every study will see a researcher situated across two differing camps, the positionality and power exerted, and how you are perceived and welcomed, will have an impact on the access to data. This was an area of the research that I did not perceive becoming such an issue.

9.3.3 The Short Term Impact: What Did I Achieve?

Whilst short-term impact, or improvements, can be difficult to measure, I think it is worth reflecting on the achievements of the research. I agree strongly with the work of McNiff (1995) that by working with an organisation you are automatically adding a benefit to their organisation: You are encouraging them to reflect, review and discuss areas for improvement. My research presence at S4L meant that they had to consider impact, and how they measure and evidence impact, in a constructive and organised method. Collaboration between researcher and what may be described as the "problem owner'' is essential to the success of the AR process (McKay & Marshall, 2001). Appendix Thirteen offers the reader an insight into the longer-term impact achieved by the AR conducted at S4L.

Researchers such as Parnell and Richardson (2017) & Glenn *et al*. (2017) stress strongly that by being involved in an AR study an organisation will have experienced a period of reflection and growth. Whilst I agree that by being involved in an AR study, and the level of analysis and discussion that was required, will have improved S4L, I still feel compelled to list areas of improvement.

Short-term I feel strongly that the AR process made S4L realise that there was a disparity in the working relationship between the delivery and non-delivery team (or

suits and tracksuits). Their relationship, whilst never abrasive, was certainly not as harmonious as it could have been, with both sides in particular in disagreement about the level of M & E involved, especially for the payment by results contracts. The research worked well by identifying this breakdown in communication. The S4L SMT acted upon this, with regular discussions on the level of M & E agreed. Site visits were arranged so SMT could witness first-hand how difficult M & E can be to capture on the ground (Coalter & Taylor, 2010; Haudenhuyse, Theebom & Coalter, 2012).

Another impact, whilst hard to quantify, was to initiate conversation with the S4L staff team about M & E, evidencing impact, and their own role in improving the service at S4L. Monitoring and Evaluation had gone from a term used for purely a tick box exercise for funders, to an exercise that staff understood was vital for the continued improvement of S4L. M & E was no longer feared, but was seen as an important part of the job role, and used to assess what services worked well for the beneficiaries. The mind-set and culture towards M & E had shifted because of the study. Additionally, the M & E policies at S4L were improved, with an impact committee formed and a new online data input system ordered, ready for use in 2019. Whilst there were still areas for improvement, I felt that the impact, both short-term and long-term of the study, were extremely positive.

9.3.4 Personal Reflection: How I Have Improved

It is difficult during the stressful period of attempting a PhD to actually reflect and evaluate how much I have improved, both personally and professionally through the research conducted. I have become, or certainly attempted to become, an expert, both

from an academic and industry angle, with regards monitoring and evaluation within the third sector.

I have questioned the, at times, unquestionable role of sport for social and personal development within young people (Coalter, 2009). I have drawn up strategic plans, read intensively, travelled nationwide for interviews and conferences and spoken to people at length about how we measure the impact of sport. I have chaired research meetings, helped to devise committees, and presented my research to both academic and sector-specific audiences.

The independence to plan, evaluate and analyse my own time and research schedule has been a valuable learning experience. Starting a PhD was an intimidating experience, but with a well-detailed schedule and extensive planning, and a growth mind-set I have achieved what I hoped to.

I feel strongly that I will carry the unique set of skills that the PhD has taught me forward into my future career. I am now a confident, professional and attentive researcher, who can complete qualitative interviews to an extremely high standard. My analytical skills and eye for identifying emergent themes has improved tremendously. I have been fortunate to receive the opportunity to complete a thesis in a research area that I am extremely passionate about. I would now like to continue my research in this area.

9.4 Summary of Reflections

This chapter focused on a reflection on the research conducted within the thesis, using a personal narrative. This chapter granted me the opportunity to speak candidly about the impact of the research and any difficulties that I faced (McIntyre, 2007). The chapter started by presenting my background, and discussed the influence that this

will have had on my research. Future ambitions for the research were presented. The chapter concluded with a reflection on how completing an Action Research thesis has influenced myself. The final chapter will now present a summary of the research.

10 Summary, Conclusions & Recommendations

10.1 Chapter Introduction

The concluding chapter will revisit the appropriateness of the aim and research question in the light of the investigation (Aims 10.2). Clarify the extent to which the research was able to address them (Impact 10.3) and highlight particular gaps or issues still to be resolved or where research is needed (Further Research Proposals 10.4). This chapter will first begin with a concise summary of the thesis. The work of Molineux (2018) guides the conclusions section, analysing further the practical changes and legacy left at S4L through the Action Research.

10.2 Aims of the Research

This thesis has offered an insight into the complexities and realities of collecting and evidencing M & E data for sports themed employability charities. The thesis is presented through qualitative forms of enquiry, namely industry interviews and an Action Research approach. In particular, the Action Research approach allows an in-depth investigation into the power struggles that can exist when a charity is under pressure to be constantly collecting data in order to evidence their impact. The research reveals that charities are under scrutiny from funders, especially when funded on PBR contracts.

The issues of power, and power relationships between funders, suits and tracksuits is a constant theme that weaves throughout the thesis (Manley, 2012). The data reveals that there is a reliance on each member (s) of the power group to perform their roles, concerning M & E collection, and perform their roles well. M & E data, the thesis reveals, is paramount for charities to prove to prospective funders and stakeholders that they can be trusted and relied upon (Macmillan, 2013) .

The interviews across study one allowed industry experts the opportunity to talk candidly about their experiences with M & E. The themes emerged organically using Grounded Theory, and were focused upon for the Action Research stage. The Action Research phase then investigated the realities of collecting and completing M & E data in detail in addition to a collaborative approach to improve how S4L evidence their social impact. The Action Research also allowed an opportunity for the research to make positive changes for the host charity and to improve their ability to evidence a social impact.

The original research questions are revisited, with a concise summary presented for all three of the questions:

1. What perspectives are prevalent across third sector sports organisations concerning their use and application of Monitoring and Evaluation techniques?

This question is discussed in section 4.7 (emergent themes). In summary, charities face difficulties in the following areas; evidencing a social impact, the expectancy versus the reality of M & E collection, a social return on investment and funders demands and expectations. These are all highlighted across study one, and the Action Research period investigated these areas further through a time period of a year.

2. How can charities, which use sport as “the hook”, greater evidence their social impact through the use of Monitoring and Evaluation?

This question is discussed in detail across Chapters four and eight. Charities still rely on participation numbers to evidence their impact, but in order to “greater evidence” their social impact, charities are in greater need to secure tangible outcomes. These are primarily in the terms of employment secured; qualifications achieved, voluntary placements, or through an accredited system such as Outcome Star that assess personal growth through a sport based intervention. These forms of tangible outcomes, can be compiled through numerical data and can really substantiate a charities claim to be impactful. Impact can be evidenced through press releases, websites, case studies, impact reports and social media. The charity sector, especially when contracted on PBR results, must evidence their impact through hard outcomes.

3. What is the reality of Monitoring and Evaluation for a medium sized sport for development charity in the third sector?

The reality, as discussed at great length in the Action Research Chapters (five, six, & seven), is that M & E is complex, difficult, and governed by a need to appease funders, as opposed to organisationally grow and learn from the M & E data. The increase of the financial demands that PBR contracts can bring to a TSO also has an offset with the increase of M & E required. Additionally, the understanding and intrinsic demand for completing M & E can be difficult for charity staff to comprehend. M & E is still very much seen as an exercise purely to appease funders demands and needs.

The senior management team at medium sized charities have to be persistent with the attitude of wanting to learn from M & E data, as this attitude will then transpire from suits to tracksuits. Whilst M & E, especially when working with challenging or hard to reach communities, can be extremely difficult to capture, an organised system for M & E collection and a desire to learn, can ensure that M & E is of paramount importance to *all* charity staff.

10.3 Impact of the Research

The work of Molineux (2018, p.7) has been vital when attempting to offer conclusions for the work produced through this thesis. The questions by Molineux (2018) designed to gauge how ready for organisational change a charity are. These questions ideally would have been used within the first round of interviews at S4L, however the work of Molineux was released after this research had commenced, hence the questions now being asked retrospectively as a method of conclusion.

- Is your organisation (S4L) ready for change?

On reflection, I would be able to say that yes, S4L are ready and were susceptible to change. This may not have been the case for all members of S4L staff, especially some of the tracksuits that I encountered access issues with. The fact that S4L instigated change by allowing a research student the opportunity to have full access reflects well on how the organisation was ready for change.

- Are the leaders committed to the change?

Yes, 100% yes. S4L have a leadership structure that encourages a growth mind-set and are ready for change. The leadership structure at S4L welcomed the Action Research process, especially the probing and reflective questions that allowed a deeper level of thinking. The S4L leadership group were welcoming to the formulation of an impact committee and the feedback issued on a delivery model change.

- Who are the other key stakeholders that need to be involved?

The key stakeholders were the S4L staff, both the suits and the tracksuits, who allowed me the opportunity to understand experience the realities of M & E data collection. I encountered and worked alongside consenting course participants, there data was not an important focus for this thesis.

- What is the likelihood of resistance and inertia? (Molineux, 2018)

This question would have been vital at the onset of my Action Research period. I was not naïve enough to expect complete openness and access from everyone involved in the AR process, as my readings on AR (Parnell 2013, Richardson 2012) had forewarned me that this was not always possible. However, it was difficult to experience a wide range of tracksuits collecting M & E data, and the realities of this, when I faced resistance from certain members of the S4L delivery team. Thankfully, I was able to be adaptive and still experience an abundance of live M & E collection; however, I did not expect this issue when I started the AR.

10.3.1 The Impact of the Research Post Study

Working at S4L after completing my research, (Appendix Thirteen) allowed me the opportunity to evaluate and reflect upon the impact of the Action Research conducted. Strategic changes were suggested and acted upon (see Action Research Cycles one, two & three for further explanation). I have been fortunate, and granted a position that many action researchers would relish: the opportunity to assess if the proposed AR changes have been acted upon, and if they have had any substantial impact (either positively or negatively), over a longer period. Kember (2002, p.90) states that longer-term outcomes are important because they considerably magnify the extent of the impact. The significance of this employment at S4L has meant that a proportion of my writing up process was completed whilst I was an S4L employee. The issues that this raised are discussed in Appendix Thirteen.

Academics such as Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) and Stringer (2013) state by taking part in Action Research, especially when the AR is collaborative, that you (the researcher) would have made an impact by allowing the host organisation the opportunity to reflect and aim to improve their services. However, whilst not dispelling the work of Kemmis & McTaggart (2005) and Stringer (2013), I wanted to use the unique opportunity to offer a short review of the proposed major changes suggested, and to focus on how they now operate, post AR, at S4L. Using the work of Molineux (2018) as a reference, I am interested in my impact on organisational change. The following sections below present the reader with an overview on how the AR changes operate at S4L presently (as of December 2019).

10.3.2 RAG Rating Review

This system is incorporated in the S4L induction policies, with a set criteria designed to band a NEET as either red, amber or green (dependent on the initial assessment answers). This has helped both mentors and their line managers assess their caseloads (a mentor with a high amount of red NEETS not expected to achieve immediate outcomes). This has also allowed S4L the opportunity to greater assess what barriers are the most prevalent at stopping a NEET becoming EET, and they can then react greater to these. The NEETS are not aware of their RAG rating; these records are confidential for the S4L staff.

Whilst this could be perceived as one of the minor changes to have resulted from Action Research, it has been a vital technique for staff to manage their active caseloads and outcome expectations, as well as a useful piece of information for reporting back barriers to employment to funders.

10.3.3 Delivery Model Change

This was the largest AR change in terms of strategic delivery. S4L have now moved away from their cyclical delivery model to a bespoke mentoring model. The new system allows NEETS the opportunity to meet with a mentor on a weekly basis for as long as they require support. It was highlighted through the AR that the previous cyclical model meant that previous participants (NEETS who attended a get fit for employment course) was “forgotten about”, and there was a shift in the deliverers attitude towards preparing for the next course, as opposed to working with the NEETS to achieve outcomes (NEET to EET). Whilst there were positive elements to the

previous model (group rapport, teamwork, achieving a sports leaders qualification), I have been able to see first-hand the positives that the new approach has delivered. These include a greater level of individual service to a NEET, a quicker turn around for outcomes, a more bespoke service, and a greater geographical reach for the S4L delivery team.

10.3.4 Long Term Impact Tracking

This area has improved through a new Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) system, allowing all S4L staff the opportunity to store safely the contact details for all participants. Additionally all mentors are in touch with their NEETS for up to a year, ensuring that a longer relationship is formed. However, there has still not been any improvements on the alumni system that was proposed, and no management of how LTIT (especially over a considerable period of 2-5 years) can be utilised by S4L. It would appear that S4L still do not see this as a priority area of development.

10.3.5 Greater Understanding of How and Why M & E is collected

Whilst difficult to contextualise the impact of people's understanding towards M & E, I notice a difference in the way staff now understand M & E. Additionally I have noticed that staff realise how M & E can be used to greater impact on their work, for example a mentor can display to a job centre work coach how many people they have converted from NEET to EET through statistical data. I felt that when I began Action Research staff, especially the delivery team (a common trait discussed in the analysis of study

one) M & E was purely collected to appease funders and senior management only. The use of the new CRM and new technology (accessible tablet computers) has meant that M & E is now easier to collect and input. Monitoring and evaluation procedures and data is discussed at every meeting, further ingraining the importance of M & E for organisational growth.

10.3.6 Impact Committee

The impact committee formulated during my initial AR period is now a pivotal part of the S4L management structure and organisation. In particular, the impact committee led on a new delivery model change at S4L, and worked with key consultants on an Impact for Growth funding bid. The Impact Committee meets monthly, and will continue to assess impact at S4L.

The formulation of the impact committee will act as a legacy for the thesis, with the committee continuing to review impact, and to continue many of the Action Research principles within S4L.

10.4 Further Research Proposals

The thesis will now highlight future recommendations for research, focusing on areas that will add a further evidence base to the thesis. These discussion ideas conceived through analysing the research, and could work to either add, or even debate, theoretical concepts that have emerged from within the thesis.

10.4.1 Further Investigation into Social Impact and the Third Sector

It was beyond the scope of this research to assess in detail the UK Third Sector, and the demand to evidence social impact (Arvidson, 2009). Whilst this research particularly focuses on charities that use sport to improve people's lives, further research into a different area of the UK charity sector, for instance the arts or youth clubs, would be beneficial. An investigative approach into the importance of evidencing social impact, contrasting the differences and the funder's demands, could follow on and use the findings from this thesis as comparative data (Taylor *et al*, 2015).

It would be interesting to analyse if the demand for evidencing a social impact is unique to the sport sector. With recent financial cuts across the UK third sector, the ability to evidence a charities impact could be the difference between existing or joining the many charities that are forced to close prematurely (Dayson, 2013).

10.4.2 Additional Research into the Complexities of Collecting Monitoring and Evaluation Data.

Further research could be conducted into the difficulties and complexities when collecting M & E data. This research has identified that it is difficult, when conducting sport sessions in tough environments, to collect "live" M & E that is impactful. The

mind-set of the M & E collectors, and the intrinsic or extrinsic motivation for collecting M & E would also be worth further research.

An ethnographic study, where a researcher could “live and breathe” M & E data collection, would offer further insight into this research area (Skinner & Edwards, 2005). Whilst this research has offered a comprehensive overview of the realities of collecting M & E data within the third sector, the researcher was working with two very different groups (suits and tracksuits). An ethnographic study that focuses on working with one of these groups would offer a further insight.

10.4.3 What can Sport Achieve, Without a Sport Plus Model?

A difficult area to research, but I feel it would be interesting to add another layer to this research by identifying what impact sport alone can achieve on a young unemployed person. Every charity involved in this research utilised either a “Sport Plus” or “Plus Sport” (Coalter, 2010) approach, where sport was never central to the learning objectives. If a researcher used a longitudinal approach, and tracked a participant in a sport setting, who for instance was attending a sport session once per week, I could speculate that they would improve their teamwork, communication and motivation. However, it would add a further viewpoint and descriptive analysis, on how sport can help to achieve societal goals, through sport alone. This would either support or dispel the many claims of sport evangelists (Coalter, 2010) who associate sport with endless positives. Methodologically the research was contained to a time-span that needed to produce research for a PhD. A researcher without these time restraints could explore and produce rich data from completing a longitudinal study.

10.4.4 Funders Viewpoints on the Third Sector and Social Impact

A large part of this thesis discusses the importance of funders, particularly their demands for rigorous M & E insights. What this thesis does not offer though is the funder's voice. It would be insightful if a funder, especially a large-scale funder, could share their viewpoint through a semi-structured interview. I would be very interested to know what a funder would like to see in M & E data; what importance do they place on impact and insight; and lastly, how can they make M & E collection simpler and easier at the ground level.

The idea for this funder's voice emerged when I interviewed a member of the S4L team, who, had over a decade of experience working for a large national funder. We joked during the semi-structured interview that they had turned from "poacher to gamekeeper", and their perspective and funding experience made for a very interesting discussion. Certainly, there is an academic omission from discussing the funder's considerations and views.

10.4.5 A Long Term Tracking of a Sport-Plus Participant

Similar to what I wanted to see at S4L, I feel it would be advantageous and add new knowledge, to track a "sport plus" participant (s) over a considerable length of time (3-5 years, for instance). This could be a cohort of Sports Leaders participants, and it

would be interesting to see what impact that attending a sports leadership course has on a person's long-term job prospects.

It would also be beneficial to use a long-term approach to evidence change to funders. Attribution and success (or not, as may be the case), of certain courses, could also be identified. This would also answer some of the questions raised in research by Walker, Hills and Heere (2017), who question the validity and employability prospects after completing a sports leader's qualification.

10.4.6 Mission Drift in the Third Sector & Payment by Results

It would be compelling to interview a range of charity CEO's, and to discuss how mission drift can happen when working under the power of payment by results contracts. Bennett and Savani (2011) explored the concept of mission drift, but do not speak to charities directly about the impact it can have. Additionally Ebrahim, Battilana and Mair (2014) discuss mission drift and how to avoid it, but again there is no direct interviews with anyone from within a charity organisation.

Additionally, a discussion around the pressure to diversify their income and avoid a payment by results method would make a worthwhile contribution to knowledge. The issue of payment by results and the impact, both financially and ethically, on a charity's aims would be an interesting piece of research. The CEO and operations manager at S4L were transparent with their struggles at dealing with a payment by results culture, and this topic is worthy of further exploration.

10.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter summarised the research, offering a concise summary and conclusion to the reader. The aims of the research were revisited and the impact of the research analysed. The chapter concluded with future recommendations for research.

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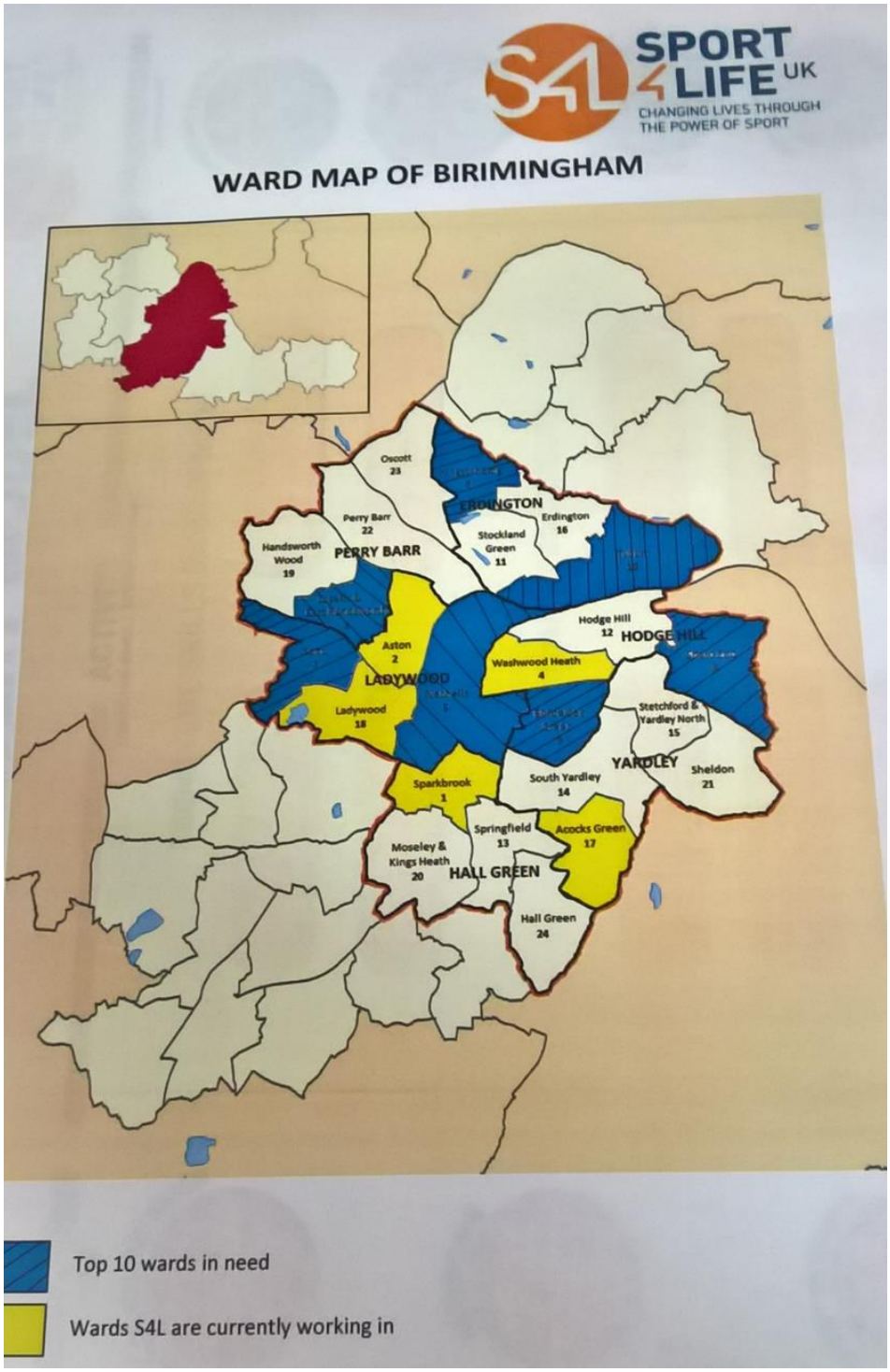
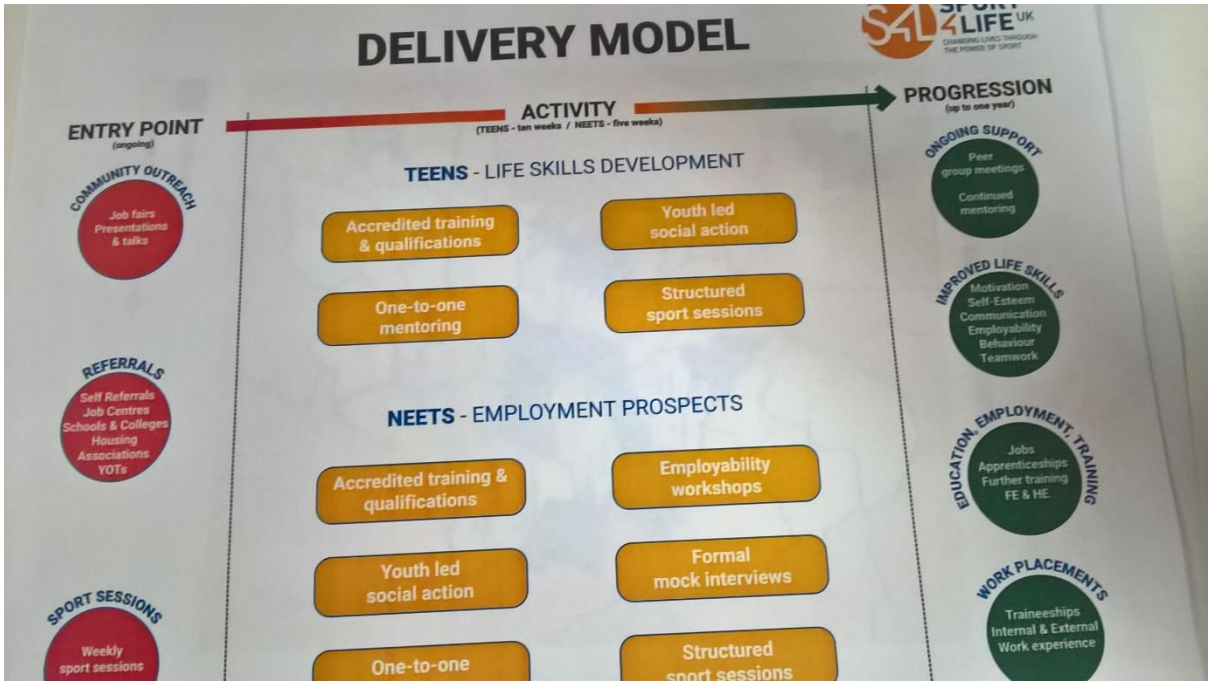
Appendices

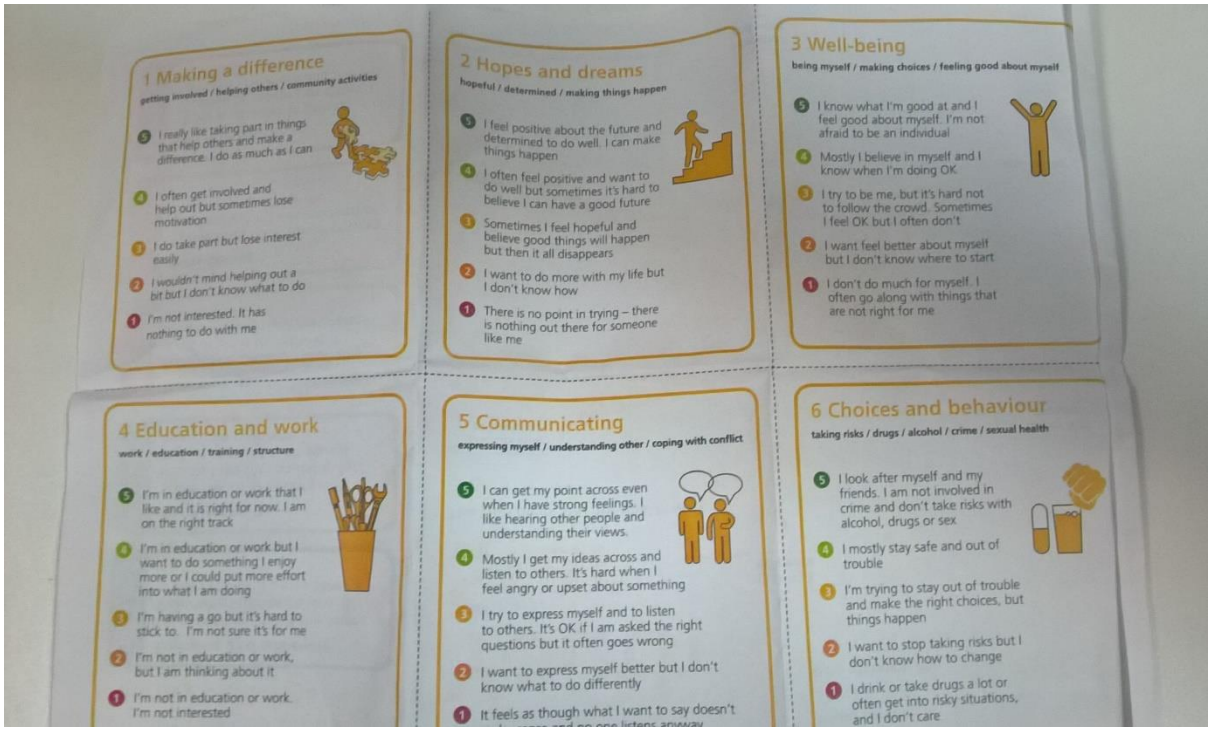
Appendix One- S4L Ward Map


SPORT 4 LIFE UK
CHANGING LIVES THROUGH THE POWER OF SPORT
WARD MAP OF BIRIMINGHAM
Oscott 23
ERDINGTON
Perry Barr 22
Erdington 16
Handsworth Wood 19
PERRY BARR
Stockland Green 11
Hodge Hill 12
HODGE HILL
Aston 2
Washwood Heath 4
LADYWOOD
Ladywood 18
Stetchford & Yardley North 15
YARDLEY
Sheldon 21
South Yardley 14
Sparkbrook 1
Springfield 13
Acocks Green 17
Moseley & Kings Heath 20
HALL GREEN
Hall Green 24
Top 10 wards in need
Wards S4L are currently working in

Appendix Two- Sport 4 Life Delivery Model



Appendix Three- Outcome Star Definitions and Example



1 Making a difference
getting involved / helping others / community activities

5 I really like taking part in things that help others and make a difference. I do as much as I can
4 I often get involved and help out but sometimes lose motivation
3 I do take part but lose interest easily
2 I wouldn't mind helping out a bit but I don't know what to do
1 I'm not interested. It has nothing to do with me

2 Hopes and dreams
hopeful / determined / making things happen

5 I feel positive about the future and determined to do well. I can make things happen
4 I often feel positive and want to do well but sometimes it's hard to believe I can have a good future
3 Sometimes I feel hopeful and believe good things will happen but then it all disappears
2 I want to do more with my life but I don't know how
1 There is no point in trying – there is nothing out there for someone like me

3 Well-being
being myself / making choices / feeling good about myself

5 I know what I'm good at and I feel good about myself. I'm not afraid to be an individual
4 Mostly I believe in myself and I know when I'm doing OK
3 I try to be me, but it's hard not to follow the crowd. Sometimes I feel OK but I often don't
2 I want feel better about myself but I don't know where to start
1 I don't do much for myself. I often go along with things that are not right for me

4 Education and work
work / education / training / structure

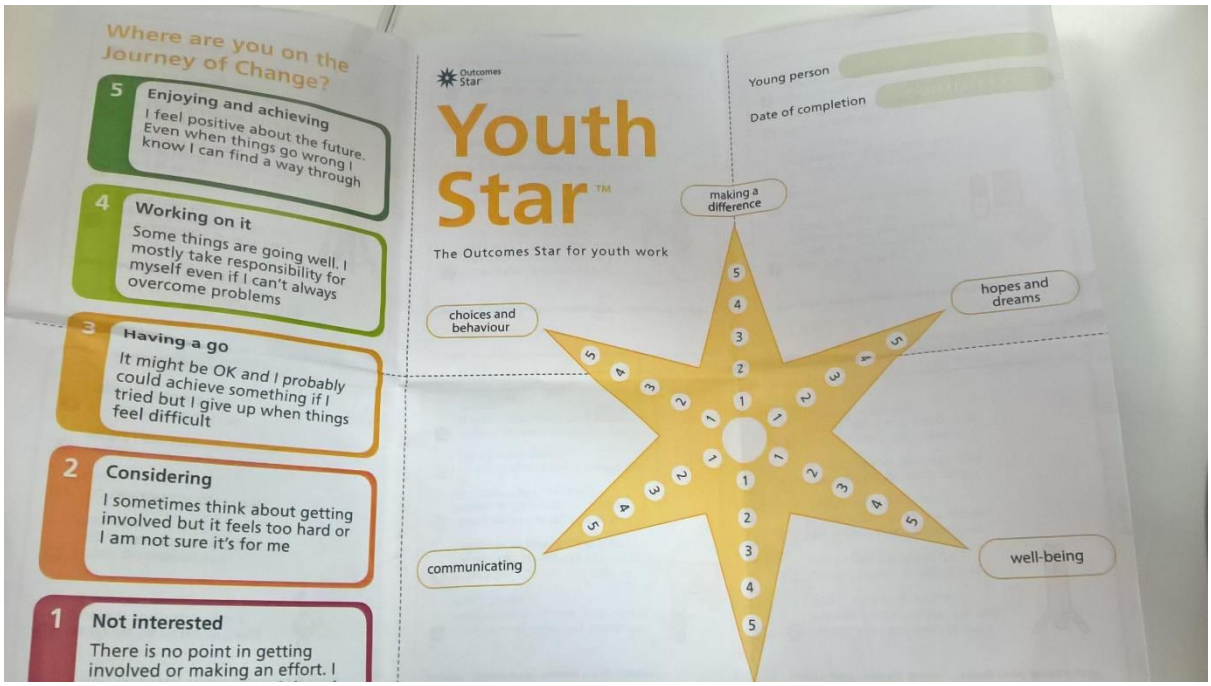
5 I'm in education or work that I like and it is right for now. I am on the right track
4 I'm in education or work but I want to do something I enjoy more or I could put more effort into what I am doing
3 I'm having a go but it's hard to stick to. I'm not sure it's for me
2 I'm not in education or work, but I am thinking about it
1 I'm not in education or work. I'm not interested

5 Communicating
expressing myself / understanding other / coping with conflict

5 I can get my point across even when I have strong feelings. I like hearing other people and understanding their views.
4 Mostly I get my ideas across and listen to others. It's hard when I feel angry or upset about something
3 I try to express myself and to listen to others. It's OK if I am asked the right questions but it often goes wrong
2 I want to express myself better but I don't know what to do differently
1 It feels as though what I want to say doesn't

6 Choices and behaviour
taking risks / drugs / alcohol / crime / sexual health

5 I look after myself and my friends. I am not involved in crime and don't take risks with alcohol, drugs or sex
4 I mostly stay safe and out of trouble
3 I'm trying to stay out of trouble and make the right choices, but things happen
2 I want to stop taking risks but I don't know how to change
1 I drink or take drugs a lot or often get into risky situations, and I don't care



Where are you on the Journey of Change?

5 Enjoying and achieving
I feel positive about the future. Even when things go wrong I know I can find a way through

4 Working on it
Some things are going well. I mostly take responsibility for myself even if I can't always overcome problems

3 Having a go
It might be OK and I probably could achieve something if I tried but I give up when things feel difficult

2 Considering
I sometimes think about getting involved but it feels too hard or I am not sure it's for me

1 Not interested
There is no point in getting involved or making an effort. I

Outcomes Star

Youth Star™

The Outcomes Star for youth work

Young person

Date of completion

making a difference
hopes and dreams
well-being
communicating
choices and behaviour

Appendix Four- Study One Interview Questions

Interview Questions

- 1: How do you currently monitor and evaluate your sport projects?
- 2: So you talked about it a little bit but how much of your project time is devoted to M & E? Do you have a full time M & E officer working here?
- 3:, How do you then evidence your impact? What kind of strategies do you use to say “This is working; we are making an impact in Birmingham”?
- 4: Yeah, so please tell me what are your thoughts on that? For showcasing your impact and the use of SROI? DO you think that displaying your evidence in financial terms is a good way moving forward?
- 5: So what do you believe are the social impacts that your sport projects can achieve?
- 6: So really, I think we agree that that project is more than simply counting numbers coming through the door. So how could you measure that impact? I know you have talked about confidence. Is there a form or a process of M & E that could measure the impact you may have on a person from day one to let’s say twelve months down the line? Do you use a form of M & E for that?
- 7: No please don’t apologise that’s a perfectly good answer. Has there been any projects that you have worked on where your M & E systems have made you realise this is a great project, it’s working and we are going to replicate it in a similar area or similar setting?
- 8: Do you predict then, and I know that this is a hard question to answer, and I appreciate that projects are always going to involve some number crunching,

that Sportivate would have a shift towards using M & E looking at the Social Impact that a Sportivate project may have?

- 9: Well that leads me nicely to my next question. Some of the M & E timescales can be quite short really can't they? But what you are trying to evidence might take a year, two, three, four even five for you to say "Yes we have really made an impact on this run down area of Birmingham because we put a Judo club on five nights a week". How could you counteract that? IS it purely a case of the host funder, be it Sportivate or Sport England wising up to the fact they need more longitudinal M & E?
- 10: Are you charged with producing impact reports and M & E reports that are then published?
- 11: So do you think that is the next real form of impact in this sector then? That real form of financial impact? For instance give us £2 and we will turn it into £20
- 12: Have you ever encountered any negative experiences with M & E?
- 13: In your experience what makes a successful sports project?
- 14: Ok well that leads me on to my last question then, so how are they going to evidence that then?
- 15: So do you think then that with a stronger M & E and better use of impact reports, and for instance you used the multi-sport hub as an example, if you could really showcase that we have different genders , religions and even gangs in here playing sport together would that help attract future funding? IS it reciprocal?

Impact Meeting Agenda – 06.12.17

Standing Items

Quarterly:

1. Operational plan update (October, January, April, July)
2. Impact Log update

Every meeting:

1. Actions update (Google Keep)
2. Impact for Growth bid update
3. Case Management Review

New Items

Priority

1. **Function Skills -** A comparison of how many young people require functional skills training vs. how many young people get this through direct training vs. how many young people receive this through an apprenticeship. Discussion around how can we record this information better.
2. **Hidden NEETS research (CC)** - Craig to present.
3. **Street League Impact Report (CC) -** Craig to discuss insights
4. **Sport 4 Life Impact Report update (SM/TCF)** → VIDEO LAUNCH
5. ***Action Research Proposals* (CC) -** CC to present
6. ***Toolkit and research* Launch in Brussels (SM)** - SM to present at meeting
7. ***Inclusion vs Exclusion discussions continued* (M/T/S)** - Review the discussions at team meeting around inclusion vs exclusion criteria (further discussions at MM). Discuss (i) feedback, (ii) actions and changes to implement, (iii) new model.
8. IMPACT FOR GROWTH

Non-Priority

1.

Appendix Five- Submitted Ethical Approval

Ethical Approval

Briefly outline your project, stating the rationale, aims, research question / hypothesis, and expected outcomes. Max 300 words

This project will aim to investigate how Monitoring and Evaluating (M & E) is currently conducted by third sector Sport Development providers in England. A number of sport development providers, who work in the third sector and are not for profit establishments, will offer insight into how they use M & E to help deliver successful projects. The third sector, often uses sport as a way of engaging young people to help transform their lives, but is under constant scrutiny to showcase this impact (Wainwright, 2008).

The role of sport in contributing to broader social goals is now the prevailing feature of the vast majority of sport development projects in the third sector. However, the systematic evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of such intentions is sparse (Kay, 2009). There is indeed a widespread lack of clarity regarding the nature and longevity of social outcomes from participation in sport development schemes (namely the Social Return on Investment (SROI) which is claimed). The impact of the work with particular target group presently has little academic research.

The demand for detailed monitoring, evaluation and outcome data in interventions with socially excluded young people reflects governmental concern that such intervention should be 'evidence-based' and represent 'best value' (Crimmens *et al*, 2004). Crabbe *et al.* (2006) suggest a number of reasons for why M & E has historically been ignored in sport. These include an inherent belief in the good of sport, a lack of concern to measure its impact and apparent difficulty measuring that impact.

This study will seek the views of industry experts on the use of M & E in sport development. The outcomes are expected to be a rich set of qualitative data, which will add to the academic literature on this topic.

How will your research be conducted? Describe the methods so that it can be easily understood by the ethics committee. Please ensure you clearly explain any acronyms and subject specific terminology. Max 300 words

The research will be conducted via a number of semi structured interviews with sport development providers, ideally with both front line practitioners and management. These interviews will be conducted face to face by the researcher at a time and venue

that is suitable and safe for both parties. The researcher will start each semi structured interview with ten lead questions, identified from a systematic literature review and relevant to the study. The interviews will be recorded with the use of a Dictaphone device.

Sparkes and Smith (2014) feel that semi structured interviews allow the participants to have a greater degree of flexibility with their answers and provide the interviewer with greater knowledge about them than could be gleaned from a structured interview.

The researcher will conduct a pilot interview with a local sports development expert prior to completing the semi structured interviews. This will allow the researcher the chance to assess their questions for clarity, and allow the researcher an opportunity to hone their skills discussing this topic (Creswell, 2014). This interview will also be filmed to allow the researcher the maximum opportunity to reflect on their interview technique.

All of the interviews will take place with consenting adults, who are discussing their experiences from a professional view point, and will not aim to cause any form of distress. There should be a very low emotional risk attached to the study, as the participants are purely sharing their work based experiences. No incentives will be offered for participants in the study. The researcher will show no undue bias to any particular set of opinions that may lead from the interviews.

Anyone involved in the study will be asked to complete a consent form prior to being interviewed and will be informed that they are free to leave the interview or withdraw from the study at any point.

What in your view are the ethical considerations involved in this project? (e.g. confidentiality, consent, risk, physical or psychological harm, etc.) Please explain in full sentences. Do not simply list the issues. (Maximum 100) words)

The research will aim to provide rich data detailing the realities of conducting M & E whilst protecting participant's anonymity throughout. Risk, whilst on a minor scale, could be present if a particular interviewee condemns a past or present sport development project or past employer's M & E policies. The participants must be assured of complete anonymity in order to speak confidently and reveal honest answers. McNamee, Olivier and Wainwright (2007) stress that anonymity is key in solidifying the relationship between researcher and participant in the qualitative research process.

How will you ensure that the identity of your participants is protected (See RPU website (www.wlv.ac.uk/rpu) and follow link to Ethical Guidance pages for guidance on anonymity

Pseudonyms will be used when presenting the key findings from the study. Whist some descriptive measures may be used when presenting key findings, such as key target groups worked with or size of the sport development provider, these will be limited to not reveal the identity of any participant in the study. Interviews will be transcribed and then categorised into capital letters or numbers, as advised by Jones, Brown and Holloway (2013). The transcription of interviews and the use of pseudonyms will be completed no later than twenty four hours after each individual interview.

How will you ensure that data remains confidential ((See RPU website (www.wlv.ac.uk/rpu) and follow link to Ethical Guidance pages for definition of confidentiality)

The use of pseudonyms will ensure that the work remains confidential. The work will aim to help sport development providers and government bodies understand M & E better and will aimed to be published. So the use of pseudonyms will ensure that all results will remain completely confidential for all the participants involved.

How will you store your data during and after the project? (See RPU website (www.wlv.ac.uk/rpu) and follow link to Ethical Guidance pages for definition of and guidance on data protection and storage).

All interviews will be filed on a password protected computer, with the original recordings being deleted as soon as they have been transferred and safely stored. A copy of all recordings, for safekeeping, will be transferred onto an external storage space that will be kept in a locked cabinet at Wolverhampton University. Interviews will be transcribed by the researcher with pseudonyms inserted. Only then will anonymised versions be available to fellow researchers who may help with the review of the data collected.

Paper copies of the interviews will be safely filed and locked away in a storage space at Wolverhampton University.

Appendix Six- Informed Consent

Institute of Sport

University of Wolverhampton

Primary researcher: Craig Corrigan

Supervising Researcher: Dr. Richard Medcalf

Aims

The aim of this project is to discuss the use of Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) techniques currently used in sport development projects.

Confidentiality: All discussion in the interview will be strictly confidential and in line with the code of conduct of the British Sociological Association. Your data will be stored in a locked cabinet at the University of Wolverhampton and eventually destroyed. All interviews will be transcribed with the use of pseudonyms. The only people with access to the data will be the primary and supervising researchers.

You are free to withdraw from participating in this research and withdraw use of your data at any time without any negative pressure or consequences.

Please place a cross box to confirm that:

1. you have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had opportunity to ask questions

2. understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. agree to take part in the above study and agree to the terms set.

Name of participant:_____

Signature of participant:_____

Date

If you require further information, please contact: Craig Corrigan (University of Wolverhampton) **email [e-mail address redacted].**

Appendix Seven- Planned Action Research Timeline at Sport 4 Life

Planned Research Timeline at Sport4Life

Start Date: Induction and introduction to the S4L team to be spread across two half days on Thursday and Friday the 11th and 12th of May. This has been agreed to work around SM's calendar.

Proposed Research

An Action Research project that aims to offer valuable insight exploring the realities of conducting M & E in the third sector. Qualitative data collection will include observations, field notes, informal interviews with S4L staff, semi-structured interviews with S4L staff and analysis of S4L M & E data and collection methods.

Working Groups at Sport4Life

M & E is collected on THREE working groups. SPORTS Engagement; Regular sessions that include a planned sport delivery. These sessions are used to promote S4L and also can act as recruitment for NEETS (16-29) and TEENS (12-16), who are the additional two groups.

S4L have a planned change of their organisational outcomes in July 2017 and will be adapting their current M & E to suit this change. The researcher will be able to experience the current M & E system and assess any differences with the change to a different M & E platform.

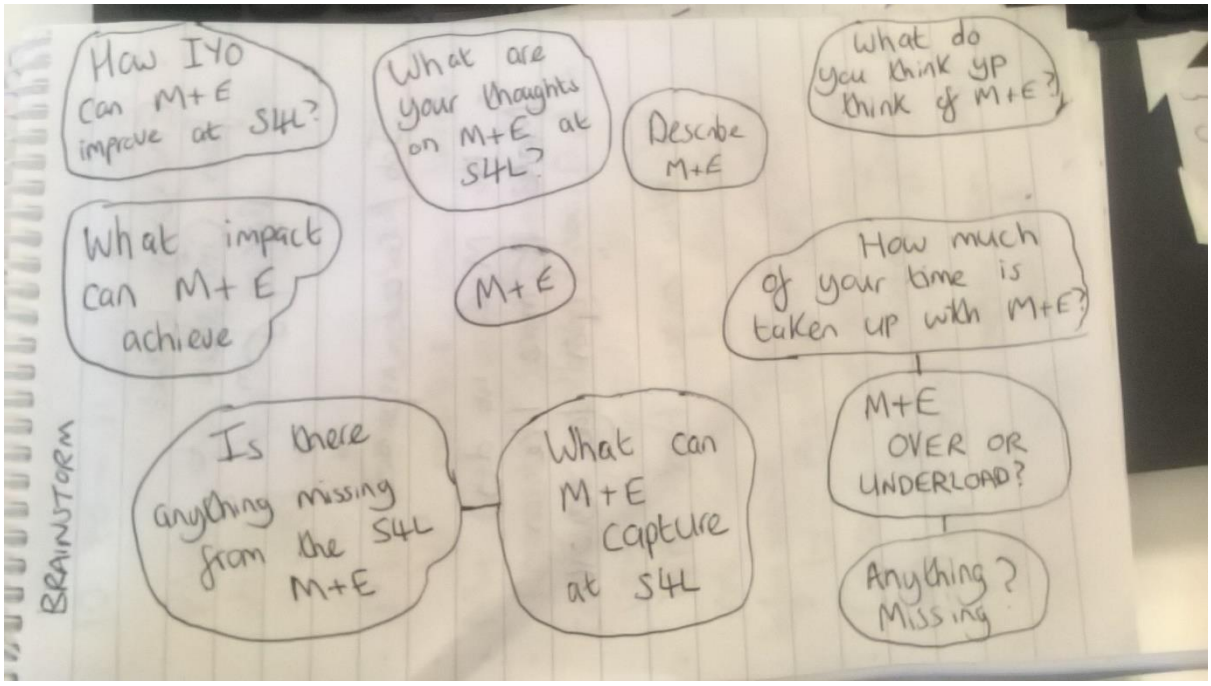
Estimated Dates	Research Proposal/Themes
May 2017	As agreed in discussion with SM the first month will be used to make the researcher fully acquainted with working life at S4L. A full induction will be carried out. Time will be spent getting to know ALL of the S4L team and introducing the research idea to them. All participants (S4L staff) will be asked to sign an informed consent sheet to agree to become a participant in the study. A presentation, explaining the research in greater detail will be presented to a delivery committee at the first appropriate meeting point. This time period will also allow the researcher the opportunity to frequent and become familiar with the site delivery locations, based in three separate venues in Birmingham. The researcher will also use this time period to gain knowledge on the upcoming S4L projects (Neets & Teens) that use M & E to track participants journey. Researcher to be issued with S4L workwear, an email address and a job title (Research Officer). The decision has been made to dress as a S4L employee during all research periods, not to mislead anyone, but to attempt to effortlessly ingrain the researcher fully in the S4L culture and to be seen as "one of the team". The internal email address and job title will also help with integration, as well as creating a suitable method for contacting participants, scheduling diaries and accessing important documents. Job Role/Responsibilities discussed with SM to be Research Officer. Carrying out the research on M & E but also helping with the delivery and data collection where required. Sitting in on one to ones with young people, general observations, issuing feedback to S4L. This is an area that will acquire tact and at

	times diplomacy from the researcher. The researcher is not there to "conduct" the M & E but to assist the delivery staff if required. Initially I am expecting S4L staff to be sceptical of my presence and I am fully aware that I need to offer reassurance that I am not there to be judgemental of their professional approach to conducting M & E. The research needs to see M & E being conducted in its truest form, not a highlighted version to impress a researcher. The lengthy time period spent researching and integrating with the S4L delivery staff will hopefully allow the researcher full access to "real M & E at the coalface". An emphasis will be placed on gaining the trust and support fully from the delivery staff. Participants must be reminded of the complete anonymity assured in this study and be willing to discuss honestly their views on M & E. In the first month data collection will deliberately not be as intensive as later in the study, but will allow the researcher an adequate time period to pilot data collection methods and experience transcribing and analysing primary data.
June 2017	Full immersion in data collection with a proposed working week as follows: Monday (S4L Offices), Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday (Site visits and data collection), Friday (Walsall Campus, transcribing and analysis of data). This working week will have to have elements of flexibility and will be governed by S4L's schedule. Some weeks may include more data collection then analysis and vice versa. However the importance, certainly in the earliest stages will be on immersion in data collection and gathering insight. Researcher to be constantly self-critical and reflecting on data collected for areas of improvement. Data to be analysed and used to guide the study. Researcher to be conducting data analysis using a planned and well detailed method. All data to be transcribed verbatim and inputted into Nvivo and stored safely. Initial early coding to be conducted, but ALL data to be stored for further coding at a later date. Researcher to liaise with SM and work alongside a different member of delivery staff each week. This rotation will continue until every working member has spent time with the researcher. *Rotation to be monitored and assessed after first cycle* Is this the best policy to continue throughout the research period? Or would a more ad-hoc programme work best? Or a combination of the two? Researcher to assess.
July 2017	S4L staff have a non-delivery gap in this month, no employability courses will take place. This time will be used to conduct interviews with S4L delivery staff who

	have been conducting M & E. Their thoughts, suggestions and views on the effectiveness of the current M & E collection method will be recorded and analysed. Regular meeting's/discussions to be conducted with SM at S4L and supervisory team to assess progress. Ideas for planned Action Research proposals or suggestions for change to be discussed with both parties.
August 2017	Data Collection Period All data collection periods to be guided by reflective cycle, with the researcher reviewing the success of data collection, methods of collection, analysis and positionality of the researcher each month. Changes or amendments will be tracked using a research diary. Researcher also to consult with mentor for advice and suggestions on improvement. Analysis of interviews with S4L staff, ANNUAL LEAVE PERIOD
September 2017	Data Collection Period on NEETS Course's in Birmingham. 3rd of September-25th of September Staurt NEET's Delivery (Witton)
October 2017	Data Collection Period and proposed change inputted. Non Delivery Period- Finalise plans for proposed Action Research Change Initial Ideas...Long Term Impact Tracking, Vlogging, Social Media Diarys, Analysis of Outcome Star Metrics Ideas to be agreed with SMT and deliverers by Friday 3rd of November

	Will spend last week of October completing site visit with Ashley
November 2017	Data Collection Period 5th of November Delivery starts with Stuart again in Witton with proposed change
December 2017	Data Collection Period
January 2018	Data Collection Period
February 2018	Data Collection Period
March 2018	Reflection with SM and supervisors on the impact of Action Research proposals. Final parts of Data Collection and commencement of full data analysis and writing up.
August 2018	Draft of thesis complete. Presentation of research findings to S4L board.

Appendix Eight- Original Draft of Questions for Sport 4 Life Staff



Appendix Nine- The Ten Year Plan

Show us Realistic Ambition!

Work, Family, Hobbies & Travel

What will they look like in 10 years time??

Divide an A4 piece of paper into quarters and label each corner- WORK, FAMILY, HOBBIES & TRAVEL

Grab a pen/pencil and start to draw what you would like your life to look like in ten years time.

Don't rush, but remember you are not being judged on your drawing skills!

10 Year Plan

Now Present and Discuss your Plan with the group.

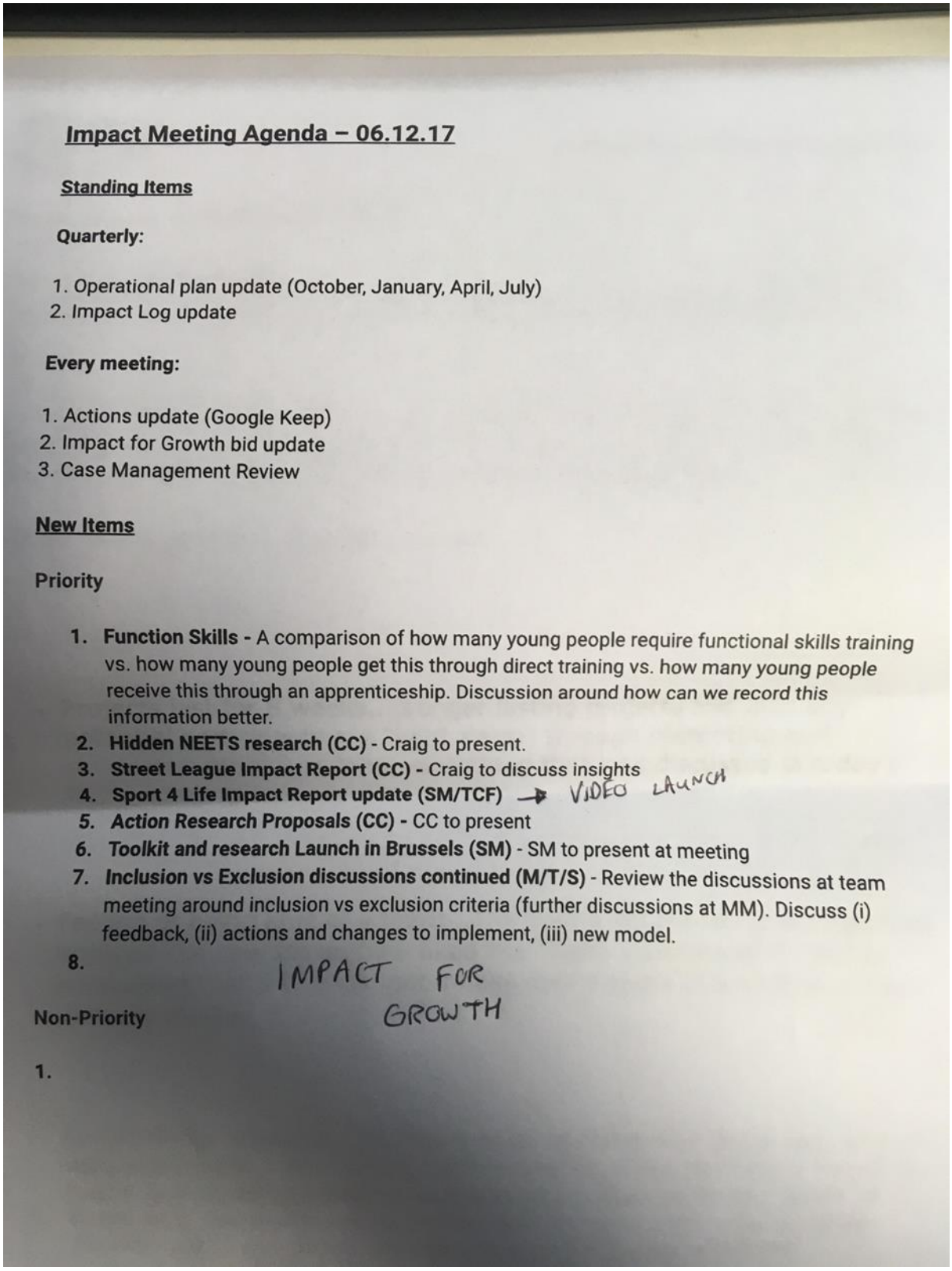
Are the Goals Achievable?

DO the 4 Corners match up?

How can YOU make the plan happen?
Could you be developing leadership skills now? How could sport or hobbies help you?

Keep the plan somewhere visible and use it to motivate you.

Appendix Ten- Improving Impact Meeting Agenda



Impact Meeting Agenda – 06.12.17

Standing Items

Quarterly:

1. Operational plan update (October, January, April, July)
2. Impact Log update

Every meeting:

1. Actions update (Google Keep)
2. Impact for Growth bid update
3. Case Management Review

New Items

Priority

1. **Function Skills -** A comparison of how many young people require functional skills training vs. how many young people get this through direct training vs. how many young people receive this through an apprenticeship. Discussion around how can we record this information better.
2. **Hidden NEETS research (CC)** - Craig to present.
3. **Street League Impact Report (CC) -** Craig to discuss insights
4. **Sport 4 Life Impact Report update (SM/TCF)** → VIDEO LAUNCH
5. ***Action Research Proposals* (CC) -** CC to present
6. ***Toolkit and research Launch in Brussels (SM)*** - SM to present at meeting
7. ***Inclusion vs Exclusion discussions continued (M/T/S)*** - Review the discussions at team meeting around inclusion vs exclusion criteria (further discussions at MM). Discuss (i) feedback, (ii) actions and changes to implement, (iii) new model.
8. IMPACT FOR GROWTH

Non-Priority

1.

Appendix Eleven- Final Questions at Sport 4 Life

Final Sport4Life Interviews for Deliverers & Non-Deliverers

1. How important are the OS for S4L, why do you consider them important?
2. Is S4L or the Third sector in general in a move to PBR?
3. How will a PBR culture affect M & E? Will it change or alter what you collect/evidence?
4. Do deliverers REALLY understand the importance of M & E ?
5. Are funders interested in softer outcomes?
6. Do staff receive any M & E training?
7. How can S4L improve on collecting job related evidence?
8. IF you are using M & E to analyse PBR numbers, and you are being driven by funding numbers, will this mean S4L will start to recruit and work with NEETS that are nearer the job market?
9. How can delivers and non-deliverers work with a greater synergy on M & E?
10. Any updates on improving the LONG TERM IMPACT TRACKING?
11. Why is creating a 10 year plan important for S4L and young people?
12. A shift from courses to mentoring? Why? How will this affect M & E?
13. Anything to add/we may have missed???

Appendix Twelve- Action Research Changes- Brainstorm

Proposed Action Research Changes

After undertaking months of critical research that has included applied M & E work, interviews with key stakeholders and extensive field work, as a researcher I have struggled to identify a “major” M & E shift/AR change that can be measured and reviewed in 2018. My ideas so far have focused on the following improvements:

- Each S4L attendee to join a central social media database (e.g.Facebook) in order for S4L to greater evidence their longer term impact. A system in place that is easy to manage and helps S4L with their LTIT (long term impact tracking).
- A workshop that allows all of the S4L participants the opportunity to document their “Ten Year Plan” to their mentor, before their first Outcome Star. This then allows their mentors to greater understand the desired job/college requirements, and the mentor can start to look into possible outcome pathways from the first week of a course.
- A greater use of technology that captures the social impact a S4L course can achieve. This could be through a greater use of social media, video capture, and recorded interviews.

The S4L SMT would like to see the following improvements from their delivery team:

- An evidence of regular M & E work as opposed to M & E only taking place at the end of a GF4E course.

- Greater quality in collecting hard outcomes (job letters, college inductions etc)

- A greater pride in collecting M & E to prove impact

- An improvement in time management when on a GF4E course...especially pre and post course hours, 9am & 4pm. Deliverers are complaining of being "snowed under" but SMT very cynical.

- A greater shift towards S4L staff being mentors....NOT just delivery providers/coaches. Staff very honest to admit that the "calm after the storm" when a course is finished can be used to almost sit back and relax/chill.....This should be the key time where deliverers UP the pace, not slack off. A change towards a mentoring model would not allow this to happen.

- A greater attitude towards M & E data collection, not just paying lip service to it.

- M & E data collection still very extrinsic and funder driven, needs to be more intrinsic and a shift towards how the data can greater inform S4L and improving the individual. The funders are only one element.

- M & E being completed daily/weekly instead of at the end of a GF4E course.

- A lot of these improvements are cultural, in regards the changes and improvements need to come from within (the deliverers). Perhaps a workshop on the importance of M & E collection and job readiness?

Answers to the question I posed: How do S4L define M & E as successful?

: If it is completed and accurate (again I see a link here to power struggles)

: If the M & E can be used to evidence that targets are being hit.

Proposed change could be that S4L deliverers now input data to M & E system on a weekly basis. Any reading around this? IS this again another Smallish change??

Fixed targets for S4L staff to have to achieve at the end of a course with regards interviews/placements?

Reading around “typical” AR changes has been complex, with most completed AR work based in education (mostly secondary schools). Within sport research, few researchers have adopted action research approaches. While some researchers in sport management have adopted some processes of action research, Chalip (2015) has rightly noted ‘‘although action research is well established in mainstream social science, the dearth of action research by sport scholars is noteworthy’’ (p. 400)

Appendix Thirteen: Post-Research Employment at Sport 4 Life

The “Outsider” becoming an “Insider”

Early January 2019, I received a phone call from the head of operations at S4L. We had kept in touch via social media after the completion of my research, but a phone call was uncommon. Unexpectedly the phone call was an enquiry on my current employment position, with S4L urgently needing a new member of staff who could start immediately on an existing project. My PhD funding has finished in October 2018, and I had been working as visiting lecturer at the University of Wolverhampton, but the hours were infrequent and I needed the financial security of full time employment.

I immediately considered the implications that working at S4L would have on my thesis. Whilst at this stage (Jan 2019) all of my primary research had been fully conducted, analysed, typed up and presented to my supervisory team, I was aware that by working at S4L I could be accused of the following:

- Writing a thesis that reflects positively on S4L, and not a document that offers the necessary level of probes and criticism required in Action Research.

And/or:

- Have developed a relationship through the research that was solely intended to gain myself future employment.

I will now answer both of these remarks, in order to display to the reader how I feel that they have had no negative influence on the creation of this research and the presentation of the final thesis.

Firstly, the large proportion of the thesis was already written by the time of my employment commencing at S4L. I feel strongly that the validity and attention to detail that was conducted during the Action Research process evidences that this thesis, and the research conducted, was a thorough and independent research. The research aimed to be critical at the correct times, to ask uncomfortable questions (when I felt necessary) and to really focus on how a charity evidences their social impact to the best of their capabilities. The aim, of both the research and the host charity, was to improve through the Action Research. This would not have been achieved if I, as the protagonist in the AR approach, were interested in merely being a “cheerleader” for S4L.

As for the second hypothetical question, that I conducted research at S4L with the purpose of gaining future employment, I again feel that this was not the case. Whilst creating and maintaining positive relationships was an important area of focus for the AR, in order to gain access and ask leading questions, this was conducted with the justification for conducting research only. My intentions were purely to conduct the best possible research that I could, in order to gain the greatest data, and to produce a rich and detailed thesis that chronicles the reality of the third sector.

I actually take great pride in the fact that I was offered terms of employment by the host charity. I believe that this further validates that the research, and the way that I conducted myself, was professional and to a high standard throughout. Furthermore, working at S4L post Action Research has allowed me the opportunity to evaluate the

impact of my proposed changes and areas of improvement. This will be discussed in detail in the next section.